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HORROR MOVIE HEROES

EDITED BY
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INTRODUCTION

by DAVE ALEXANDER

"WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE HORROR MOVIE?"

It's that question. The one horror fans get asked — most often by non-horror fans, in my experience — as a way to gauge just what kind of terrible things make us tick. My response to it is usually, "It depends on the hour," because horror is a genre so rich in style, substance, and subjective affect that it can't be encapsulated in a single movie.

I can easily find "horror" films that scare the hell out of me, thrill me with special effects, bend my brain in surreal directions, make me laugh with outrageous gore pegs, deliver pulse-racing tension, soothe the axonal brain with depictions of organic violence, excite the academic mind with bigger questions about our relationship to fear, or just unleash cool-ass monsters for pure eye-candy purposes. For all these reasons, it's no easier to pick just one horror movie here than it is to narrow down a floater film.

While Frankenstein's Monster was my original horror movie hero — my jaw hit the floor the first time I watched him lumber about the lab — I've come to understand that the experience of Frankenstein's monster is a collaboration of Boris Karloff's iconic performance, Mary Shelley's original novel, a team of screenwriters, Jack Pierce's makeup, James Whale's direction, Charles D. Hall's art direction and the efforts of producer Carl Laemmle Jr. to bring them all together.

So, expand outward from one film to an entire genre and there are more horror movie heroes than you can shake a bawling tooth at. And for more than can fit in one 144-page book. So instead of trying to give you an all-encompassing look at the women and men that have left

their permanent footprints in the genre, we have — to keep with the Frankenstein metaphor — stitched together something that exemplifies the breadth of horror cinema.

Directors, actors, producers, writers, effects artists, composers are all here. Some are legends, some are journeymen, others are rebels, many are pioneers, a few are ready for rediscovery and all are worthy of the title of this book. Note that the number of pages devoted to each one doesn't reflect any sort of hierarchy, but represents our attempt at variety... mixed with availability of interview material, of course. That means we sought out many of the heroes here for new, exclusive interviews (including ones with the likes of David Greenberg, Adrienne Barbeau, Stuart Gordon and Jess Wardle), reprinted some of our favorites from past issues of Rue Morgue, such as my interview with Vampire (the last one she ever gave before her death), and in some cases, went through our archive of interviews for material that has never been printed before, including words from Ray Harryhausen, Christopher Lee and Stan Winston.

My favorite parts of *Horror Movie Heroes* are the pieces in which we asked genre icons to talk about their horror heroes. For example, Mick Garris discusses his love of John Carpenter, and Carpenter in turn pays tribute to Carlo Argento. And damn, if Peter Bogdanovich's recollection of working with an aging Karloff, while also paying the demands of shooting a Roger Corman movie isn't pretty mindboggling. I hope you feel similarly that what you're holding connects as all as this big, breathless, fascinating beast of horror fandom that's constantly building and dissecting itself. Which leaves one last question...

So, who's your horror hero?

INTRODUCTION

by APRIL SNELLINGS

WHEN WE ANNOUNCED THE TITLE OF THIS VOLUME, A READER-POINTED BUT THAT, WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF JOHN WILLIAMS FROM THE EVIL DEAD FRANCHISE, there are no heroes in horror movies. I enthusiastically disagree; horror films are full of Elton Ripleys and Nancy Thompsons, of Leslie Strodes and Martin Brodys, of Doctor Loewes and Father Merrins and Agent Starlings. And then there are the countless characters that earn their hero stripes by dint of not dying easily—in movies, as in life, sometimes the most heroic thing you can do is to simply try to survive.

Some say it's the same for those working in the industry. But that's a discussion for another time, because Volume 2 of the *Rue Morgue* Library is dedicated to a different sort of horror movie hero: those who make the films we love. In Volume 1, *200 Alternative Horror Films You Need to See*, we catalogued the titles that have helped define our lives, now the spotlight is on the people who have helped define our favorite genre.

When it came time to assemble this volume, there were plenty of obvious choices. You can't pull out a book called *Horror Movie Heroes* without including guys like David Cronenberg and Guillermo del Toro, for instance, as you'll find in-depth interviews with both filmmakers in these pages. We've taken a multi-generational approach, too, which means you'll hear from trailblazers such as H.G. Lewis and Tobe Hooper, as well as relatively newer blood like Larry Fessenden and James Wan. Horror is a wonderfully multicultural affair, as well, so Japanese body-horror pioneer Shinya Tsukamoto shares the spotlight here with Spanish auteur Jaime Balagueri

and Cuban samurai Alejandro Jodorowsky.

And when we asked our heroes about their heroes, we were surprised by some of the names that came up. Cases in point: *I Sell the Dead* director Glenn McQuaid makes a powerful case for a reconsideration of exploitation maverick William Grefor, and *Halloween II* director Tommy Lee Wallace explains why he finds Ray Kellogg's low-budget atom-age monster movies so charming.

Finally, this volume gave us another opportunity to test the boundaries of the genre we love. Paul Verhoeven should not come to mind when you think of horror filmmakers, but that should change after you've read his thoughts about revisiting Frankenstein's avenger for his gory, postmodern classic *RoboCop*. And if you're unfamiliar with the likes of Paul Zane, Craig Reardon or the Cordova family, this is a perfect place to get acquainted.

Naturally, some of my own horror heroes found their way into these pages. I've been putting genre filmmakers on a blood-spattered pedestal since I saw *Now Dark* when I was twelve-years-old. I'm still waiting for a response to the fan letters I wrote to Kathryn Bigelow back then, but Amy Holden Jones and Barbara Crampton proved much more accessible and they talk about their adventures in horror cinema here.

In the meantime, I hope you'll get to know your own heroes in the pages that follow, and perhaps discover a few new ones to boot. Incidentally, you'll find many of my heroes lurking in this book's bylines and masthead. A huge thank you to the *Rue Morgue* writers, editors and designers who pulled this off. No one could ask for a better family.

The Bread



THE FATHER OF THE NEW FLESH
GRANTS US AN EXCLUSIVE AUDIENCE

DAVID CRONENBERG

by MICHAEL DOYLE

DISTURBING. SUBVERSIVE. FEARLESS. REPULLENT. UNIQUE. UNFORGETTABLE.

These are just some of the adjectives that have been used to describe the singular cinema of David Cronenberg. Born in 1943, he studied biochemistry at Toronto University of Toronto before switching to English literature, writing several (unpublished) science-fiction stories. His creative impulse found a further outlet when he shot his first short, *Transfer* (1967), following it up with two futuristic underground films, *Stereo* (1968) and *Crosses of the Future* (1970). These nascent works exhibited themes and ideas that would emerge fully in the filmmaker's later work: psychosexual disease, bodily mutilation, remote institutions, surgery, telepathy and rebirth.

Cronenberg's early features — *Shivers* (1975), *Rabid* (1977), *The Brood* (1978), *Screamers* (1981) and *Videodrome* (1983) — were dismissed by some unsympathetic critics as "cheap," "naïve" and "distasteful." Each film does indeed contain nauseating scenes of physical horror that exhibit: amongst other things, phallic-looking parasites slithering in and out of various orifices, a vampire, penile bari darting out from a woman's armpit, a moist vaginal slit appearing on a man's abdomen into which video cassettes are inserted, and — perhaps most infamous of all — a human head exploding into a crimson shower of blood and brain matter. Such confrontational images — often misinterpreted as mere "glorifications of gore" — assisted in conveying the powerful ideas and probing philosophical questions Cronenberg demanded of his cult audience.

Awarded the rather ignoble title of "The King of Veneer Horror," the director has playfully suggested that he was more than happy to be coined as "the king of some-

thing." But through his transgressive and provocative notions, Cronenberg has rigorously explored what he considers to be certain fixed and immutable truths of human existence: we are born into this withering vessel of mind and body, we age, and we must succumb to the inevitable disease of death. For him, all the inherent beauty and horror of life is encapsulated within that one intractable and difficult fact. As one critic once wrote of Cronenberg, he makes "funds mentally unpalatable films," but then, the truth does not always make for comfortable viewing.

A true laser hero, Cronenberg may now be a respected, critically feted figure of world cinema, but he has never forgotten his exploitation roots or forsaken the fans who hold him most dear. The Toronto native sits down with *Five Marguerite* dissect some of the proudest themes and preoccupations that have dominated his body of work over the last four-and-a-half decades.

Most of your films are distinguished by their audacious use of visual metaphor, but I often think that Videodrome is one of the most direct examples of that approach

I don't really think of them as metaphors, although I'm very aware that after the fact, there are many ways to interpret things that you see. Sometimes I have to say to critics and analysts that they should not confuse their process with my own. It's once again a case of approaching a scene from the outside looking in, as opposed to inside looking out. Everything that happens in *Videodrome* has an emotional logic to it, and when you say the word "avataplex," which is a literary term, it inevitably starts to become about analysis. Yet, of course,

Videodrome



Scanners



Max Renn's head becoming a gun has interpretive potential, but at that point it's almost a functional thing in the hallucination of the main character. Do you know what I mean? I'm not really thinking of it as a metaphor. In other words, that's not the drive that gets me to do that. It really is a sort of reflexive thing rather than a literary, analytical thing. Again, I'm aware of that level as well but that doesn't get you to the point of actually creating this stuff. It really only comes from the dramatic and emotional dynamics of the story.

It's my understanding that you began shooting both *Scanners* and *Videodrome* without finished scripts. Is that correct?

Yes, that's true. Well, those were the crazy days of Canadian tax shelter money, and *Scanners* was even more extreme than *Videodrome* in that way. When we went out to shoot that movie, there was no script! I was actually writing it at lunchtime and in the mornings and stuff.

Scanners was the most difficult movie I ever made, partly because of that. On *Videodrome* there was more of a script, but it wasn't finished and needed resolving. It didn't have a real ending, and so on and so on. What often happened back in those days in Canada was that during October and November the tax shelter money would come in because all the doctors, dentists and lawyers realized that they needed a tax write-off. The government had mandated that investment in film would be a tax write-off in order to encourage an investment in filmmaking. So suddenly there was all this money and it would have to be spent before the end of the year for these guys to get their write-off. That often forced you into making a movie because the money was there before the script. It would be nice if that situation existed now. [Laughs] Unfortunately, money is a lot harder to come by these days. But I must insist that the fact we didn't have a completed script on *Scanners* and *Videodrome* had nothing to do with my latencies as a scriptwriter and everything to do with the timing of the money.

Did the crews ever lose their focus or trust in you during the production problems you encountered on *Scanners* and *Videodrome*?

No, I don't think so. I've always been very close to my crews and even back then I was working with people that I had worked with many times before. However, I do remember having to make speeches to the crew on *Videodrome* — it wasn't an apology, it was an explanation — because we would set up to shoot somewhere and then suddenly we had to dismantle everything without shooting a foot of film and move someplace else. Of course, for professionals that is a little disheartening because you

like a movie to have some military precision and that's usually the way a movie works — or at least *tries* to. It really was a matter of communication — letting the crew know what it was, why it happened and suddenly you are all in it together and you are collaborating. Therefore, no, it did not feel like I had lost any trust from my crew.

The character of Max Rawn in *Videodrome* has been compared with the film noir anti-heroes of the 1940s in that he is a cynical, charming, cigarette-smoking loner embroiled in a paranoid mystery. Were you deliberately tapping that genre?

I don't think so. I mean, of course, a lot of things in *Videodrome* happen at night, which is the definition of a noir film — that is why they were originally called that. I don't think so because the hero of the movie is not a very good no-ir-ish hero. I mean, you are really looking at Alan Ladd playing a detective or something like that, for it to be film noir. Here, you have a broadcast executive who is slightly sketchy and definitely not a hero of a noir film. I would say Max *more* likely would be the villain in a noir film. So I think, in that way, *Videodrome* is really kind of subversion of noir-ism rather than an actual participant in the genre.

You have always been averse to paying homage to other films in your work, citing that movies that adopt this knowing approach inevitably just become movies about other movies.

Yes, that's correct. I always try to draw upon myself in

my work, my own thoughts and observations and understanding, as a step towards ensuring some originality and original thinking. It's important to me that my films are entirely my own and represent my ideas and so on. There are several notable filmmakers who consistently rework or reference other movies in their work and I find this occasionally a restrictive and distracting thing. Of course, they are just having fun with the medium, but it's not what I like to do. I am also reluctant to use rock music in my movies, as it immediately evokes in the audience their own memories or context of the song, particularly if it's been used in other prominent movies. It removes the viewer from the world I have tried to create and sustain, and I don't think that is a good thing.

I remember one critic discussing your work in a British documentary in the late 1980s. He speculated that on the evidence of films such as *The Fly*, you must have been the kind of teenager who would pop a zit in front of a small crowd just to earn their attention and disgust. How do you respond to that?

Yeah, the Brits are very strange!

It was actually an American critic who made that comment.

Yeah, but it sounds like a British thing and I know that you are a Brit! [Laughs] They also think that I was the kind of kid that pulled wings off flies and tortured rats or something. It all comes from a terribly cliché idea of what creativity is and where a dark imagination comes from.

"I DON'T REALLY BUY THE IDEA THAT YOUR CREATIVITY SOMEHOW MAKES YOU INSANE."



The Road



The Fly



and so on. It's really that busy cliché and that poverty of imagination that is the issue, not my film.

It also illustrates the depth of serious critical analysis that was afforded horror movies for a time. Do you feel that attitude has changed now?

I do think that horror is taken more seriously these days. You know, back when I did *The Breed*, for example, there was no question of selling that film to a major distributor. The only kind of horror films that a major distributor would even consider would be something like *The Omen* because it was based on a best-selling novel and starred Gregory Peck. But in terms of low-budget horror films — horror was ghettoized, there is no question about it. I actually think that John Carpenter's *Halloween* was partly responsible for changing that view. *Halloween* was a low-budget horror film with no stars, and it made huge amounts of money, and of course money is always the issue when you are a studio. I think it was that film more than anything else that changed the attitude of the studios, and of course back in the late 1980s you also had *Easy Rider*, which wasn't a horror film but was certainly not the kind of movie that you could make at a major studio. *Easy Rider* made so much money and caused such a stir that the studios started to have a look towards a different kind of filmmaking than what they were used to. It was the exact same thing with *Halloween*. I think Carpenter's film caused a major reevaluation of horror films and genre films in general. I mean, *Easy Rider* was technically a biker movie and belonged to a mini-genre of its own, but none of the other biker movies had that same kind of impact. Again, it was *Halloween* more than anything else that



changed everything because it caused such a stir. I think that's the point when everything changed for horror films, and of course now you have *The Walking Dead* on television and all kinds of things, so it really is a different ballgame, for sure, from when I was making my first underground films.

It's often difficult to discern in your work whether or not you are an advocate of developing radical biotechnologies or opposed to them. Scanners, Videodrome, The Fly and eXistenZ (1999) all reveal a disturbing and destructive aspect to technology and how it can be appropriated by political factions and used as a weapon.

I think that's inevitable. I try to approach it objectively, but obviously part of it is the dramatic imperative, which is to say that things are more interesting when they go wrong — dramatically — than when they go right. Even if you are just talking about a family, a dysfunctional family is going to be more interesting than a well-ad-

justed, happy family [Laughs] I mean, you may want to live the life of the happy family, but you don't want to watch that on television. It's the same thing with technology. I love technology. I'm definitely a geek and a nerd, and I've always been interested in it and also in machinery too. All of those are aspects of human creativity as well, and of course all of those things have a downside. You see that with the internet now. People can't live without it, but it's been the cause of the better of hideous, abominable things. It's proving true to life, that is to say that technology, for me, is just a reflection of human creativity. It's not something that's cold and inhuman — and people often talk about cold and inhuman technology. I always say, "No, all technology is 100 percent human and there is no other kind." Technology doesn't come from outer space and is imposed on us — it comes from us, we created it. Therefore it reflects everything that we are, which is to say all of the fantastic, dynamic, creative, brilliant things, but also all of the dark, hideous, destructive, sadistic things as well. So we are really just seeing ourselves reflected back at us through television and computer screens, and so on. Therefore, I'm being objective about technology in my movies really, but with a tilt towards the dark side because, as I say, it's just more dramatically interesting.

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT MY FILMS ARE ENTIRELY MY OWN AND REPRESENT MY IDEAS."

DAVID CRONENBERG

Another predominant theme of your films is transformation. Philosophically speaking, human beings are the only creatures on Earth who undergo transformation and then reflect upon and articulate the experience.

Yes, that's right, and one of the huge neurological questions these days is, "What is the nature of consciousness?" Why are we and how are we aware of ourselves in a way that other creatures are not? That's a whole other topic we could get into, but maybe that's another theme of my movies — human consciousness and awareness and the different ways that we are aware of what we are, how we think and how our bodies develop and so on. It's exciting to me if you are a science nerd, but more than that it really has, as you suggest, huge philosophical implications as well.

Interestingly, characters in your films that are visionary men are often physically destroyed by the closing credits. Max Rame in Videodrome, Johnny Smith in The Dead Zone, Seth Brundle in The Fly, even Barry Revok and Dr. Paul Roth in Scanners, all

WHY I LOVE DAVID CRONENBERG by MICHEL BOYLE

While currently lists 27 credits for David Cronenberg as an actor, stretching all the way back to his blink-and-you'll-miss-it cameo in *Stevens* as "Infected in the crowd." Here are my picks for Cronenberg's top five turns in front of the camera.

NIGHTBREED (1990) Clive Barker's film boasts Cronenberg's most prominent acting role, as well as arguably his most assured performance. Third-billed behind Craig Scheffer and Anne Bobby, the Baron of Blood essays the role of serial killer Dr. Decker, a psychopathic psychotherapist who wishes to destroy the misadventured "monsters of Midian."



JASON X (2001) Although he is summarily dispatched within seven minutes of the futuristic tenth entry in the Friday the 13th saga, Cronenberg's professional presence as scientist Dr. Winaver provides a welcome diversion. A narrator and friend to the late director and makeup artist James Isaac, Cronenberg's thanks for appearing in his protégé's film: was to be harpooned in the back by Jason Voorhees.

THE ICE FOR (1997) Cronenberg can also be briefly seen at the climax of Gas Van Sant's twisted dramedy, in which he is killed rather benignly as "Max at Lake." He plays a courtly hitman who lames Nicole Kidman's unsuspecting wannabe to her well-deserved death at an isolated frozen lake.

THE FLY (1986) His face partially hidden by a surgical mask, Cronenberg still makes a memorable cameo in his own movie as the gynecologist who unwittingly delivers an enormous writhing maggot that has been gestating inside Geena Davis. Thankfully, it's just a dream. Or is it a premonition?

RESURRECTION (1999) Russell Mulcahy's wretched serial-killer thriller is habitually dismissed as a grisly out-price clone of *Se7en*. Set in a gloomy, rain-drenched Chicago (but clearly filmed in Toronto), it features an appearance by Cronenberg as Father Russell, a priest who offers solace to Christopher Lambert's Cogan detective.

perish or are demolished in some way for daring to look beyond. Why do you think that is such a consistent theme in your work?

Well, I think that's an old story. It's nice when you have a visionary who lives into his 90s and is actually happy! [Laughs] I must say that it doesn't happen all that often, though. I don't really buy the idea that your creativity somehow makes you insane. The whole idea of insanity and brilliant creativity being inevitably linked—I do not buy that for one second. I don't think that's the case. However, if you are out there in the world as a visionary you are certainly exposed to a great many dangers. You are very, very vulnerable, there is no question about it, and I think some of those characters you just mentioned reflect or embody that reality in some way.

People often talk about the optimism of the climax of Scanners as opposed to the nihilism of the conclusion of Videodrome, but is this a misapprehension on the audience's part? Personally, I find the ending of Scanners to be far more disturbing.

Yes, I know. [Laughs] I think it honestly has very much to do with the emotional state of the particular audience

member and how they engage with your film—or which character they engage with most—as to whether it's deemed to be positive or not. I really do believe that. Even the ending of *Shivers* is in some ways a triumph of the infected but in other ways it's actually a liberated, positive ending as well. So, at that point, it's a very subjective thing because what is positive and what is negative? There are no absolutes really, and so you can make arguments on either side about *Shivers*, *Scanners* and *Videodrome* in terms of their endings. The one thing we can agree on is that they are certainly not traditional, sentimental, uplifting endings. Yes, on that I think we can agree.

**"WE, THE CREATORS OF
HORROR FILMS, REALLY WERE
GHETTOIZED BACK THEN, BUT
IT'S CERTAINLY NOT THE
CASE NOW"**

—Walter Hill on EW dot com



The Dead Zone



THE MASTER CONSIDERS THE MAESTRO

JOHN CARPENTER

ON

DARIO ARGENTO

by MICHAEL DOYLE

FOR SOME, DARIO ARGENTO IS THE ITALIAN Hitchcock — a baroque visionary whose best films are a curious alchemy of risqué color, brazen camera movement, nerve-shredding music and stylized violence. For others, his movies are empty, excessive and barely coherent — the vile and lurid products of an unrepentant misogynist.

Whatever your view, one cannot deny that Argento's influence on horror cinema has been profound. *Suspicion* (1977), his classic tale of witchcraft at a German dance academy, is a breathtaking assault on the visual and aural senses that stands as one of the genre's enduring triumphs. His other arresting masterworks include *The Bird with the Crystal Plume* (1976), *Deep Red* (1976), *Inferno* (1980), *Tenebre* (1982) and *Opera* (1987), which all effectively marry high art, rigorous technical skill and crass exploitation to create something uniquely lyrical and unsettling.

Rue Morgue invites Argento's friend, fan and fellow filmmaker John Carpenter to offer his insights into the work of the legendary stylist.

What individual sequences do you admire in Argento's oeuvre?

There are lots of them. Sometimes his entire movies are brilliant. Dario really is a unique filmmaker and there's a nightmarish quality to his stuff. I could pick out ten or eleven scenes in *Suspicion* that you simply cannot forget. I mean, the opening sequences are just amazing! *Suspicion* gets hallucinogenic a little later when we venture inside the dance school and you see the architecture of the doorways, which resemble eyes that are looking at you. It's just wonderfully surreal — one of his best movies.

I know that you are also a great admirer of *Inferno*. *Inferno* is great. Of course, it's the second part of the "Mothers Trilogy" and continues the tradition of this

florid, hallucinatory, dreamlike landscape. *Inferno* also has a fabulously daring underwater sequence that I love. I think Dario often has a way of seeing the darkness of the world through a camera lens that is highly original and striking. His movies are beautiful and terrifying and seductive and mystifying. What else could you possibly want from a horror film? I mean, it's all there.

Some might argue that one thing missing from several of Argento's films is a coherent story.

[Laughs] Yeah, I agree, there's a little issue there, but I don't think Dario cares. I just don't think that's what he is doing. That's not what he's about.

Another stick that has been used to beat Argento is the spectacularly violent treatment of female violence in his work.

I know. Well, it's true, he's pretty brutal. I just watch those sequences in amazement and that's certainly not what I would do, let me put it that way. For the squeamish, I suppose it's a little rough, but that's part of the price of admission.

Argento originally wanted you to join him and George Romero in adapting a Poe story for *Two Evil Eyes*, but you were otherwise sequestered. Have you ever come close to working with him again?

We talked once about making something together that would have been a movie in two parts. Let's see, I had the first part of telling the story and then the main character would cross the street and Dario would pick up the second part as he reached the other side. The transition would have been perfectly seamless and Dario responded to that idea. It would have been a horror film that had one cast, one crew, but two directors. It could have been a giallo or supernatural horror or even a combo of both. It could have been anything but, really. It never came to fruition.

ITALY'S CROWN PRINCE OF SPLATTER
LOOKS BACK ON 30 YEARS OF HORROR FX

SERGIO STIVALETTI

BY DEJAN DGNJANOVIĆ

SERGIO STIVALETTI HAS CREDITED MAJOR EFFECTS FOR SOME OF ITALY'S MOST INFLUENTIAL HORROR DIRECTORS. His career began in earnest in 1965, when he worked as a makeup artist on Dario Argento's *Phenomena* and Lumberia Bova's *Don't Come Since Then*. Stivaletti has created makeup, creature and animatronic effects for such Italian genre classics as *Opera* and *Cemetery Man*. He dishes on decades of slinging the red sauce.

Your career is closely connected to that of Dario Argento. Beginning with Phenomena, you worked on all of his films that were shot in Italy. How did you get involved with him?

I worked with Angelo Mattei, who made the cadavers for *Alone* [1980]. The one floating underwater—I worked on that, though I was not on the set. I did it at my home, so I did not meet Dario then. But later I met the set designer, Maurizio Gavroni, who also took care of the animals used in *Phenomena*. I showed him some of my stop-motion work. When they started working on *Phenomena*, he called me and said, "Sergio, are you able to work on some cadavers?" I was brought to the set, and [filmmaker and frequent Argento collaborator] Luigi Cozzi was supervising. He put me in charge of making some cadavers.

But you made more than just corpses for the films...

As it turned out, they didn't have some other important effects, like the mask for the monster. No one knew what it should look like. Dario was looking at some real deformed people to use for those scenes, but it was very difficult to find someone with such deformities who could also act in

the film. Until that time I was more involved in stop-motion, and it was my first prosthetic effect. Also, I used to be a medical student—never finished, but I had some knowledge. I brought my book on genetics with photos of various genetic disorders and I did a drawing [based] on one specific syndrome, but with some adjustments so it would work better in the film. Dario was very enthusiastic about it.

How would you term your relationship with Argento? Could you call it friendship?

I can say that it is a strange friendship. When you're working with a genius, it is difficult to know what he's thinking while he's working with you. He was first and foremost impressed by my enthusiasm, and he knew he could rely on me. After *Phenomena* it was possible for him to make a film with many complex effects.

What was it like working with director Michele Soavi on 1994's Cemetery Man?

Michele is for me like Lumberia Bova—I feel like we're family. We started together on *Phenomena*, and we worked together a lot before *Cemetery Man*. He had many wild ideas, and sometimes we would fight. For example, he wanted zombies without blood, and I would go, "Are you crazy? Zombies without blood? That's insane!" But he was right. In that film, zombies are different: I wanted zombies with blood and dark liquid coming out of their faces, but he said, "No, I want zombies with powdered faces." I was disappointed because it was my first chance to work on a zombie film, and of course I wanted to use gore in it.

There are some very original zombies in that film. Were they described in detail in the script, or did you design them?

They were my design. Michele said that he wanted something between man and vegetables, because they have been in the ground for so long. I had the idea that their bodies are merged with the roots of the trees above them. Michele is very sophisticated, and although he doesn't always know exactly what he wants, he is eager to participate in the process of design. He doesn't just come and say, "Make me some zombies." He wants new ideas, and so you are inspired and pushed to produce something new. Michele is often inspired by classical art. Some of the images in *The Church* [1989] were derived from paintings that he liked. The same goes for *Dario*. He is also very much inspired by Hieronymus Bosch and other classical fantastic painters.

What is the most difficult effect you've done?

Demons was a big challenge for me. I had to do many things there that were never seen in Italy before. *Demons* was very demanding in terms of the amount of effects I had to do with my crew of only three people. I had great help, for example, Francesca di Narzo, who did many sculptures for me. I was hoping to become not a one-man effects crew, but [to launch an] effects company, like ILM or WETA.

You're also one of the pioneers in the use of digital effects for body horror – not for the sci-fi kind of effects, but for the visceral kind, the flesh and gore. CGI was in its early stages when you employed it for The Stendhal Syndrome in 1995. Where and how did you learn to use it?

Many years before that, I started experimenting with motion and cameras. For example, for the effect of lightning, to do it in a film you have to do a drawing, and then ani-

mate it, and then insert it into the film shot. So I was thinking of doing something with a monitor, putting images on it and animating it. You know, one time Tom Savini told me, "Sergio, it is time to change something. We are going to become too old for the new kinds of effects." It was just after *Terminator 2* came out, and I was blown away by its CGI effects. So I inquired what kind of computers were used for those effects and found out they were using the silicon web technology, so I found the only distributor in Italy who had those. Of course, it was not very powerful then – it had less memory than my iPhone has now. I made the images on my computer in my home, but I didn't know how to bring them from the computer onto the screen, onto celluloid. I had to go to a London company to do that.

You started working when Italian horror was in decline. What caused such a drop in the country's genre output?

I think television created a big disaster in Italian horror. It became the biggest producer and movies were designed so as to be shown on TV. They didn't want to show too much blood. It was strange, when Dario would come to me and say, "Less blood! We cannot show this on TV, they'll cut it."



Demons



Phenomena

A FINAL INTERVIEW WITH THE LEGENDARY MONSTER MAKER AND STOP-MOTION WIZARD

RAY HARRYHAUSEN

by STUART F. ANDREWS

AFTER A LONG AND FRUITFUL LIFE, A TRUE VISIONARY OF FANTASTIC CINEMA DEPARTED OUR MORTAL REALM ON MAY 7, 2013. One of the greatest practitioners of stop-motion animation in the history of the medium, Ray Harryhausen's obsession with the art form began at the tender age of 13, to-
 totes with multiple viewings of *King Kong* (1933). After con-
 suming up a number of 16mm creations, he went to work
 alongside *Kong's* stop-motion pioneer Willis O'Brien on
Mighty Joe Young (1948) before breaking out on his own
 with *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1955). In 1955,
 Harryhausen joined forces with producer Charles H.
 Schneer and for the next few decades they carved out an
 unforgettable legacy of fantasy films with the likes of *The
 Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1958), *Jason and the Argonauts*
 (1963), *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977) and
 their final mythological masterpiece, *Ghass of the Titans*
 (1981). Brought to life via the magic of "Dynamation" jo-

groundbreaking technique that made stop-motion anima-
 tion viable for low-budget productions), Harryhausen's an-
 imated creatures ignited the imaginations of film fans and
 future filmmakers alike.

In memory of this extraordinary talent, we're proud to bring
 you *Rue Morgue's* final interview with the legendary spe-
 cial effects genius.

When *King Kong* first came out in 1933, there was very little information about the film and how the special effects were done.

Absolutely. Very few people knew anything about stop mo-
 tion.

**There's a *Newsweek* article that came out that suppos-
 edly revealed the *Kong* techniques, but they were completely wrong.**

Oh yeah, that was in *Popular Mechanics*, I think.

Did that article confuse you?

Yes, because I know it wasn't a man in a suit or a big me-
 chanical thing. I remember seeing these illustrations of this
 big gorilla marching through a jungle with cables coming
 out of his heel and going to an organ. And a little man in
 the corner was playing this organ and that was supposed
 to be making *Kong* move; you know, which was a complete
 phony. [Laughs]

**When you went to work for Willis O'Brien as a techni-
 cal assistant on *Mighty Joe Young*, what were some
 of the biggest revelations you had about the craft of
 stop-motion animation?**

The Seventh Voyage
 of Sinbad



Well, some of them were rear projection because in Hawaii, you couldn't do much rear projection, although I made experiments with it at a later time. But rear projection was one of them. I did split screens and various other techniques in the early days.

O'Brien's influence on both the art of stop motion and your career specifically cannot be overstated.

Yeah, he was the one that made stars out of dinosaurs. In the early days, they used to praise the actors instead, but Willis O'Brien made stars out of the animated characters. I remember Obie told me one time that the lady who wrote the screenplay for *The Lost World* said, "I'm writing it in such a way [this]. If the dinosaurs aren't quite right, we can leave them out of the picture." Well, you can't make a picture like *The Lost World* without dinosaurs! [Laughs]

Is it true that O'Brien was not particularly fond of Kong's 1933 sequel, *The Son of Kong*?

Oh yeah, he disowned it because he didn't have much input on that [film] and it shows. I think it was [director Ernest B.] Schoedsack who said, "If you can't make it cinematic, make it funny!" And *Son of Kong* became a clown rather than what you expect a gorilla to be. We always associate gorillas with dynamic qualities even though they're nice, kind animals. We learned that later, but looking at a gorilla, you can't say that it looked like Jean Crowford or somebody like that. [Laughs]

I know you've been very critical of the 1976 Dino De Laurentiis-produced remake of *King Kong*, but what

did you think of the Peter Jackson remake?

Well, it was a different version, but the first version of the original *Kong* was so compact. There wasn't a superfluous word of dialogue in it. You know, when you go to see a picture called *King Kong*, you're not that interested in Anne Darrow's past. And they draw too much on her past before you even get to the island.

Is it hard to be critical of Jackson's *Kong*, knowing he's such a big fan of your work?

You don't want to be critical of other people's points of view, but I know Peter Jackson loves the original as much as I do. And he was a delightful person and he's a dear friend of ours but, you know, he just had a different interpretation. Faye Wray's character said it in one sentence. She said, "I was an extra on Long Island but the studio's closed now," and that told it all. What more did you need to know about her past?

When they released *Kong* on DVD, Jackson and his crew tried to recreate the lost spider pit sequence using traditional stop-motion techniques. What did you think of it?

Well, it's another version, but you can see why [original *King Kong* director] Merian Cooper cut it out. Ray Bradbury is the only one I know of who's ever claimed to have seen the original spider pit sequence, which was shot but cut [from the film] during a preview because it was highly criticized and it stopped the flow of the film. Merian Cooper made a wise decision, I think, by cutting it out. He said he didn't want a fourteen-reel or a fifteen-reel picture.



Mighty Joe Young

People tend to think of stop motion as a very time-intensive process, but it's more than that – it's a technical challenge that boggles the mind.

Yes, that's why we devised the word "Dynamation," because animation was always associated with the flared cartoon. When we made *Mighty Joe Young*, the critics said there was animation in the film and people thought there might be a cartoon. So we wanted to distinguish it when we made *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* and it didn't come out really until something like *The Seventh Voyage*.

What would you say are some of the general skills a stop-motion animator needs to possess?

You have to know how to cast things, you have to know how to photograph them properly. And lighting. There are so many techniques you have to know about in order to do that type of thing. My dad made the armatures, which I later did in metal. My early armatures were in wood. I used to get beads from the five-and-dime store and make a wooden armature, but they would melt

and you couldn't get really smooth animation. So I went to metal when I learned more about how *King Kong* was made.

*In the book you co-wrote with Tony Dalton (2008's *A Century of Stop Motion Animation*), you related an episode that happened early in your career that taught you the importance of patience.*

I threw a hammer on the floor and it went through a glass pane. I decided I'd better not lose my temper any more. [Laughs]

What was the biggest technical disaster that happened during your career?

Oh god, I can't remember. [Laughs]. There were many disasters, but we tried to take them in stride. In the early days, particularly when we went to colour, it didn't happen so much in black and white, the temperature in your studio when you left it overnight would change and then you'd see a flash where you left off and tried to continue the next day. So that became a problem in the early days of colour. Finally, they devised a finer grain film that didn't have that problem.

Obviously, a lot of the models you used look a bit tattered during the process of making the films. Some of the models seem perfectly intact today and yet for some of them, only fragments remain. Why is that?

A lot of it depends on the type of rubber you used. In some cases you had a concoction of three chemicals that you had to put in the rubber and mix it up in a food processor and pour it in the mold to make a sponge rubber. If you don't have the right consistency all the time it can fall. You have to cook it in an oven and all

Jason and the Argonauts



that sort of thing. So it depends on how careful one was, I suppose, in the original casting.

A lot of models were piloted to recycle parts for other models. Do you regret doing that now?

Well, after the fact, yes. But at the time it was the only practical thing to do because it takes a long time to make ball-and-socket joints and on the next picture, they have a schedule and time is of the essence and time costs money. So sometimes we had to take a leg off a cyclops and use it for a dinosaur.

Was there ever been an exhibition of your models?

The Sony Film Institute, which was right in the heart of Berlin, had a display of my models for three or four years.

Is that the only time they've ever been on public display?

No, I had it at MOMI (Museum of the Moving Image) here in London in the early days. That was, I think, 1989 or 1990 when MOMI was open. It no longer exists but it was one of the best film museums anywhere in the world. Hollywood never kept track of all its things, you know, and private parties went to the auctions and collected things. They talked about a museum in Hollywood, but there's never been one. The Academy now wants to devise a proper museum but it's a little late, unfortunately, because most of the studios have sold all their back stock. Even [composer] Miklos Rózsa told me they put a lot of his scores for *Ben-Hur* in the furnace because they had nowhere to store them.

On the subject of Miklos Rózsa, you've worked with a lot of great composers.

Music is so important in our type of films, I learned that from watching *King Kong* when Max Steiner did that wonderful score, which was practically like a Wagnerian opera. We've had the blessing of having wonderful composers. We've had Bernie Hermann [*Jason and the Argonauts*, *Mysterious Island*], who's a very original composer, and we've had Miklos Rózsa [*The Golden Voyage of Sinbad*], though Laurence Rosenthal did *Clash of the Titans*. That was our last picture. But we've always tried to have creative composers do the scores.

What was the extent of your working relationship with Jim Danforth, who was responsible for the stop motion in the likes of *Jask* and the *Giant Killer* (1962) and *7 Faces of Dr. Lao* (1964)?

I first met him on *The Seventh Voyage*. He was a fan. And later on, in *Clash of the Titans*, we employed him to do some animation because we had to catch up. We had technical problems and got behind schedule. On practically every film up until *Clash of the Titans*, I did

WHY I LOVE RAY HARRYHAUSEN

by STUART F. KRAMERS

Harryhausen's stop-motion creations had to reach personality and detail that it's impossible to pick five of the best. That said, here are some of his greatest ribaudonboned creatures.

RHEDOSAUR

The ferocious star of *Brontë* from *20,000 Fortunes* (1955), with its jagged spine and gnashing jaws, was the focus of Harryhausen's first feature as the sole special effects artist. The Rhedosaur's romp through New York



kicked off a wave of Harryhausen flicks that saw his creatures destroying the likes of Washington, Paris, London, Moscow and Rome.

TALOS

The giant statue from *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) is arguably Harryhausen's most terrifying character. When Hercules swipes forbidden gems from the island of Crete, this bronze behemoth bends to life in order to punish Jason's crew. The sight of Talos mauling Jason's ship remains one of the master's most incredible images.

EL DIABLO

This critter from *The Valley of Gwangi* (1969) is an Echopso, a tiny prehistoric horse that actually roamed the earth once upon a time, though not during the same period as the dinosaurs. Thankfully, Harryhausen wasn't pedantic enough to let natural history get in the way of a good tale!

TROG

The oversized humanoid with the massive horn from *Sinbad and the Eye of the Tiger* (1977) is easily one of his most lovable creations. After befriending Sinbad and his crew, Trog makes the ultimate sacrifice for his homomation pals when he fights a ferocious sabre-tooth cat in the shape of the Arctomog.

NEDUEA

For his final film, *Clash of the Titans* (1981), he went out with a bang with a flawless rendition of the infamous pegasus, a hideous creature with a head full of snakes, venom for blood and the ability to turn a man to stone with a glance. It remains one of the most technically accomplished sequels of his career.

Clash of the Titans



all the animation myself and never turned it over to any other people. Today, you know, these studios have a staff of maybe fifteen to twenty animators. They're training them now. They even teach it in colleges. So it's a different situation today.

Clash of the Titans was, regrettably, your last film. Yes, we had one in the pipeline that I wasn't going to work on but I did a lot of location hunting for it, and that was *Force of the Dragon*.

Why didn't that materialize?

Well, we couldn't raise the proper money. You know, costs kept going up. We made *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* for \$650,000. You can't buy a costume for that today! [Laughs]

As recently as the late '80s, you were developing another Greek mythology fantasy epic, *The Story of Odysseus*. What became of that?

I don't know. It just petered out. I don't know the details on it, but we did a lot of work on it.

Was there an actual script?

There was a rough script but they go through many changes, you know. The type of picture Charles Schneer and I made together for years, we would create the script. It wasn't what you'd call a director's picture in the European sense of the word because we would lay out the script. Charles Schneer and myself would bring in a lot of drawings, and the writer's job was to incorporate these drawings into the script in a logical way. And we were very careful. Sometimes we had three or four writers on a screenplay before we would actually shoot

it. But these are things the boys in the backroom do. The audience isn't supposed to know that. Sometimes only one person gets a credit on the script but there may be other people involved that bring in ideas.

The release of *Jurassic Park* in 1993 was a huge turning point in the evolution of visual effects. What did you think when you first saw the film?

I was very impressed with it but, you know, CGI — it's a different technique. Kermit the Frog brought back the hand puppet, which goes back to ancient Greece, and [the 1960s television series] *Thunderbirds* brought back the string puppets. Those are all different techniques. The main thing is to entertain the public, and they don't care particularly what technique you use as long as it's an entertaining film.

Finally, Ray, I want to say that if I had to distill down to a single image all the wonderment and magic of childhood, I'd have to pick a frame from one of your movies. So as you've heard many times before, thank you for giving me a childhood!

Well, thank you very much. I get a lot of fan letters saying they prefer our films to CGI because sometimes when they make a fantasy film, they're too real and that destroys the whole fantasy aspect. The charm of the original *King Kong* was that nobody at that time knew how it was done. They knew it wasn't a man in a suit because we'd seen Charles Garmos in a gorilla suit many times and Laurel and Hardy comedies and various other pictures. And then they had *Godzilla* (1950) and all those pictures where men were in gorilla suits, but *Kong* had that difference. So the stop motion combined with live action was a very presentable thing to tell a story.

THE GODFATHER OF THE ZOMBIE FILM PAYS TRIBUTE
TO THE DIRECTOR OF PEEPING TOM

GEORGE A. ROMERO

ON

MICHAEL POWELL

INTERVIEW BY STUART F. ANDREWS

What are your thoughts on Michael Powell as a filmmaker?

Michael Powell is my man. I love his movies. The guy was a genius. The guy was a journeyman. He made beautiful, artistic films, such as *Black Narcissus*. And he made these propagandist war movies [snickering]. *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing*. And he did his duty. He never should have gotten left out of the mix. He was just a wonderful film maker.

Peeping Tom effectively destroyed his career.

He blames it for destroying his career. I think they didn't give him a break. They came out and said the most vicious things about it. Someone said the best way to handle this film is to take all the prints and throw them into the sewers. It was just dreadful. He liked the film very much and he thought it was a serious study of voyeurism. There's a scientific word for it: *Scoposcopy*? *Apocopest*? Or something. They use the word in *Peeping Tom* but I can never remember what it is. There's a "scop" in it somewhere.

Scoposcopy: there's a "pshh" at the end.

Okay, we got the middle and we got the end. [Laughs] Franky, I think he was more interested in putting the clip on Pinewood [Studios]. I think it's more of a slap at the British filmmaking system.

Yeah, because as much as anything, it's a portrait of how they made films in England.

Yes, it is. As many moments as there are alone with the [protagonist] and watching what he does, there are all these moments in the studio watching how the producers and directors are stupid — you know, just doing the same thing they do in the US.

Maybe that portrait of the British film industry fuelled the antagonism towards him?

I think so. And maybe it was propaganda. I can imagine

those executives sitting in a screening room looking at *Peeping Tom* and saying, "What the hell is this?" And I'm sure they poverned later and said, "We can't release that." They sold the negative immediately before it ever got distributed and, as a result, it never did get any reasonable distribution until the Criterion DVD came out, largely thanks to Martin Scorsese who was a big supporter of Powell.

He was in awe of him.

I think he was, I was. But there were so many similarities between what happened with *Peeping Tom* and what happened with *Right of the Living Dead*. I mean, *Right of the Living Dead* was reviled. *Peeping Tom* was reviled. It didn't get good distribution. We got distribution but it was really limited on the drive-in circuit. It wasn't considered a serious film. And then in its afterlife it became this sort of cult favourite. Both of them did. But *Peeping Tom* took longer to get to audiences.



Peeping Tom



THE ONE AND ONLY GODFATHER OF GORE LOOKS BACK ON HIS CAREER AS A SPLATTER-FILM TRAILBLAZER

H.G. LEWIS

BY RODRIGO GUDIÑO
NATIONAL INTERVIEW SPECIAL OF THE GORE-MET

IN A WORLD OF TRENDY AND FADY, ENDLESS COPYCATS AND BLATANT RIP-OFFS, there is only one Herschell Gordon Lewis. Lewis' claim on history is simple: he invented the gore film. That was back in 1963 — an age when the attitudes and ideas of the '50s were just starting to undergo public scrutiny. In that time of waning optimism and yielding family values, Lewis spouted out *Blood Feast*, a film that reed all chances at polite discussion by showing a woman's leg getting hooked off and her tongue carved out — all in glorious, blood-red colour and all within minutes of the opening credits.

The notoriety of *Blood Feast* allowed Lewis and production partner David Friedman to launch the genre's first franchise. In time, they expanded their film into a full-fledged Blood Trilogy that included splatter classics *Two Thousand Maniacs!* (1964) and *Color Me Blood Red* (1965). Following an admirable split, Lewis continued to battle in the greater series of films such as *The Wizard of Gore* (1970) and *The*

Gore Gore Gals (1972). The stamp of his brand — outrageous violence, maniacal characters, lurid poster art, shocking slogans — can be directly traced to the work of John Waters, Rob Zombie, Lloyd Kaufman, Frank Henenlotter, William Lustig, George A. Romero, Tobe Hooper, Wes Craven and many others.

Lewis dusts off the oversized cutlery to help us get his gory legacy.

The original Blood Feast has this kind of Lewis II to Beaver meets Grand Guignol style about it with an emphasis on poking fun at Middle America.

What a wonderful simile and yes, of course I'm making fun of that. I'm making fun of all the bastards who take themselves so seriously I'm making fun of people who think they're making movies but who don't have the least notion as to what entertainment really is. I am making fun of people who spend other people's money wankily, not caring about anything other than their own ego. Yes indeed, I'm making fun of that.

So much has transpired since you released the original Blood Feast back in 1963. Can you still gross people out after movies like The Exorcist, Evil Dead and the genre aspects of the genre?

There's very little left that will startle people. They've gone beyond that and I guess we are largely responsible for them having gone beyond that, because when you do something once you wonder what do you do for an encore? You squeeze an eyeball and then you figure, "Well, now what am I going to squeeze?" — There are still areas to be explored, people are still willing to be convinced that they are outraged just because you tell them they are.

The Gore Gore Gals





**Two Thousand
Maniacs**

That's a curious combination of entertainment and psychology in which a lot of people seem to falter.

It was an incredibly subversive act to actually make a movie like Blood Feast. There was a real rebelliousness at the heart of it all.

Yes, people sometimes say, "Who were your masters?" I would hate to accuse anybody of that! [Laughs] Certainly there are directors whose work I admired — Robert Altman and Stanley Kramer — some of these people who took the bit in their teeth, and by the way I'm not trying to parallel myself with them. But in this kind of movie we had no masters, nobody had ever done this before. That was the whole idea.

What appeals to you about making exploitation movies?

I'll go back to my original philosophy, which was to make the kind of motion picture that the major companies either could not make or would not make. Even with some of the effects they've had in pictures like *Alien*, no major company would dare make a movie like *Blood Feast 2*. Why? It's too far outside the mainstream and that is precisely why we made it that way. It's a specialty picture, it's positioning. Anybody in the world of advertising will tell you, without positioning the independent hasn't got a prayer. With positioning, the independent can command some attention. So my answer to your question is that I'm making the kind of motion picture that has positioned itself to appeal to a certain kind of thespian who will not feel cheated by having seen it and who will, in fact, say to some-



The Wizard of Gore

other theatregoers, "You must see this movie because it has something that no movie ever had before." And that is a simple marriage of psychology with entertainment.

Back in the early days you started off doing nude pictures. Can you tell me a little bit about the transition from sex to gore?

When we made *The Adventures of Lucky Pierre* [a nude picture from 1961], suddenly the world opened up to me because *Lucky Pierre* was a smash from the minute we opened it. But, I must tell you, I didn't like the direction that kind of movie was going in — I could see that after a

period of time we had competition. But instead of innocent volleyball and that kind of thing, people were demanding greater and greater... let's call it "sophistication." I had small kids and I said, "I don't want them to have anything to do with what their dad did." And that is what led to *Scream of the Earth* [1965], which was a more dramatic kind of movie, shot in black and white quite deliberately. It opened another door for the kind of independent movie, again following my personal philosophy of producing motion pictures the major companies either would not make or could not make.... Well, following that, the question was, "What were we going to do?" I have always believed, including up to this conversation, not to hod on somebody else's well-trod path. If I'm going to make a movie, it has to position itself, and nobody had ever made a movie in which blood spouted. And what had happened, is that I saw on TV I think it was, this gangster movie where they shot people and they died really with their eyes closed and I said, "Hey... [chuckle] that ain't the way it goes." So that is what spawned *Blood Feast* and I admit to you I had many misgivings when we were cutting the thing. I said, "What have we done here? Maybe someone will go to a midnight show on Halloween to see this." I never dreamed to have opened the Pandora's box we were opening.

You did the gore effects in *Blood Feast*, which still look great today. How difficult was it to create them with no real precedents to draw from?

Now, of course, people specialize in gore effects, but there certainly was no such industry when we made *Blood Feast*. Automatically, we gravitated towards department-store mannequins. After all, they were in a female shape, we didn't have to build anything. At that time, there was no such prop as a rubberized limb. Today you can go to any magic store and get effects we would have been out of our minds

to have. What we did that I was truly proud of, in terms of technique, was develop a stage blood that looked like blood. At the time, people thought it was real blood!

In hindsight, do you think you've ever gone too far in a scene?

No, not that I can think of. That's second-guessing yourself and that's not a healthy attitude to have. I think every one of them is understated because I didn't have the equipment to do them with the intensity that I would have liked to do them. The whole idea is that effects have to be realistic, and yet people have to say the whole thing's a joke.

There's an underlying sense of humor in your horror films, however dark they may be. Was that a natural aspect of your filmmaking sensibilities, or was it cultivated to foil the censors?

It was absolutely deliberate. I didn't want anybody to take this stuff seriously. If you look at a movie like *The Gore Gore Girls*, there's a case where the generation gap shows very clearly. It was almost as though I had split society. People under age the age of 35 or 40 thought it was a hoax; people over the age of 55 said I should be sitting up from a tree! People were supposed to know the whole thing was a big gag. That was quite on purpose.

Are you a fan of your own films?

I am a fan of *Two Thousand Menaces*! There are some films I've made that I sit there shuddering over. There is not a film I've ever done where I don't think, "Oh my god, if only I had a budget, if only I had more time, if only I had my wits about me a little better." But certainly I don't apologize for them. They had that peculiar niche in motion picture history that I don't imagine I would have ever accomplished if I had made drawing-room comedies.

Blood Feast



THE LATE, GREAT FX GURU TALKS ABOUT WALKING THE FINE LINE BETWEEN ACTOR AND IMAGINATION

STAN WINSTON

AS TOLD BY DAVE ALEXANDER

"PEOPLE GET WRAPPED UP IN TECHNOLOGY AND GET LOST IN IT. THE TECHNOLOGY GETS IN FRONT OF THE ART AND STORYTELLING, WHICH IS A HUGE MISTAKE

our business and what makes films successful and wonderful is storytelling, and storytellers who are directors who tell wonderful stories. The storyteller, the director, has all this technology at his hands in order to help him tell these stories. That doesn't mean you can't tell a wonderful story and have it be completely animated, like *Rinôçérôse*, *Shrek* or *Toy Story*. Those are wonderful movies.

The confusion happens when you're doing a movie that is grounded in reality and what you're dealing with human characters you expect an audience to buy into. You must give everyone the tools that they need to be the best artist that they can be. I come from an acting background and I came out to be an actor. Any great actor will tell you 99 percent of acting is reading, and the greatest actors will tell you they give their best performance when they have another actor to act with. Unfortunately there are directors who don't understand the importance of character and the actor in the mix of storytelling—there is nothing more important.

You literally are asking an actor to read to something that's not there, and it's a disservice to that actor. I am of the firm belief that if you buy into what's truly the priority, what really makes a story work—which is a good screenplay, a good director and fine performances by wonderful actors—then you must give those actors the tools they need when possible. If you can do it live, you do it live. In the same context, if you're creating a fantasy character, you want to allow that character to have as much performance capabilities as possible. It doesn't mean you don't use any digital, because that would be a disservice to that character, so you must balance it. It's like walking a tightrope. You must balance so that you give as much live performance as you

can to the actors, and as much reality as you can to the audience. It's not animated, it's actually there, and then you sneak in with magic. You use animation in a way where the audience is not aware you're using animation. They can't tell whether it's live, they can't tell whether it's animated. Because you've done it live and you've done things you can't do animation-wise, you've given the actor a chance to act with something that's real, and you've raised that bar.

Then the character goes beyond anything you've ever seen, and that's how it was with *Jurassic Park*. It was a wonderful mix of live action and digital. That's how it was with *Tremors* 2. You'll find that the raccoons that were the biggest hits, where audiences bought into them, were always a mix. Peter Jackson with *Lord of the Rings*: *Salem* was completely digital but the characters were completely alive. He had digital sets, he had miniature sets and he had live sets. He mixed everything up and it was magic, so that is the real balance."



Jurassic Park



THE FAMOUSLY FEARLESS ACTRESS RELISHES
HER RETURN TO HORROR

BARBARA CRAMPTON

BY APRIL SELLINGS

THE 2011 HOME-INVASION THRILLER *YOU'RE NEXT* WAS MORE THAN A CALLING CARD FOR DIRECTOR ADAM WINKLER and his troupe of "nonbeliever" cohorts—it also heralded a return to bloody fame for fan favorite Barbara Crampton. The Long Island native, best known in the horror world for her performances in Stuart Gordon's *Re-Animator*, *From Beyond*, and *Castle Freak*, had more or less retired from acting when she was offered the role of matriarch Aubrey Davis in Winkler's gory slasher send-up. Since then, Crampton has appeared in a growing list of genre projects, and has enthusiastically rejoined the horror community.

Unlike many actresses who fleshed out their early filmographies with roles in horror movies, the actress, now 56, has never distanced herself from the genre. In fact, she says it was the aftermath of one of *Nu/ve* Mag's cleverest kills that attracted her to the project.

"It probably sounds really strange to people who aren't actors, but I had this one moment in the movie where my [character's] daughter is in terrible trouble," explains Crampton, who has two young children. "Spoiler alert: she dies. I had to go through the machinations of what that's like for someone who loses their daughter right in front of her eyes. And even though I had to go through a tremendous amount of pain to call up that emotion and make that believable, there's something very freeing about having that experience and acting and being in the moment, and feeling like the scene went well."

That's something of an understatement considering Crampton's best-known characters, especially in Gordon's films. She was, er, serviced by a severed head in *Re-Animator*, chewed down on a disintegrated pineal gland in *From Beyond*, and inherited her very own hideously deformed rape-monster in *Castle Freak*. Still, Crampton says she never really set out to be a horror actress.

"I had the opportunity to work with one of the premiere directors in horror, Stuart Gordon, and he's passed me a few [projects] and I've worked for a few other people on some genre movies," notes Crampton, whose resume also includes a role in the 1988 cult favorite *Chopping Mall* and the 1989 Full Moon franchise brancher *Puppet Master*. "I don't know why these things happen, because I don't think there's any particular type of role that I play. I'm not like Robert Englund, playing Freddy or something like that."

Like most women who spend any amount of time in front of the camera on horror-film sets, Crampton was unavoidably slapped with the "screen queen" label. She doesn't mind it, though.

"It doesn't bother me," she says. "I think I'm in good company with a lot of wonderful people. It depends on

You're Next





Photo: Bryan

what movies you've been in. If you're a screen queen and there are some movies you've been in that are sort of questionable, then you might not like that moniker. But I'm very proud of all the movies I've done. I've seen my name on lists next to Jamie Lee Curtis and Fay Wray, so I'm in the company of women like that, that's saying something and makes me feel very proud."

Though Crispin was mostly absent from the horror scene in the sixteen years between *Castle Freak* and *You're Next*, she had roles in only a couple of minor genre efforts during that period; she says she never stopped being a horror fan. Like so many of us, she discovered the genre when she was very young, initially through television shows such as *The Outer Limits* and *Dark Shadows*.

"I've liked the horror genre since I was a kid," she says. "As soon as I started working in horror movies I became a big fan, and started watching a lot of them. So it feels really comfortable to me. It's fun to work on a horror movie. I like all the special effects—I think that's really cool... If you watch drama, it's a little more intellectual, but watching horror gives you a feeling inside your body, and that's a feeling I really enjoy."

Crispin's return to the genre has prompted her to examine it from a new critical and creative standpoint. She's quick to point out that, while the films she made with *Gordie* were the subject of much casual party-watching in the '80s and '90s, the genre presents new challenges for today's young filmmakers.

"I think audiences are much savvier now than they ever have been," she allows. "You have to dig deep to find something interesting. The past few years have been about

who can have the most shocking kill, who can have the most disgusting remains. There's only so far you can go with that before it just gets cold, and I think we're already seeing that. I think you have to tell an interesting story, and characters are first and foremost. The good thing is that, as our culture changes, as things in our society become more important in certain generations than in others, there are infinite amounts of stories to tell. If you keep them timely, then you will always tell a different story."

Crispin didn't initially view her role in *You're Next* as a comeback, but the experience prompted her to, well, come back. Since Wingard's film premiered to rave reviews at the 2011 Toronto International Film Festival, Crispin has appeared in Rob Zombie's *Lords of Salem* (most of her scenes were ultimately cut) and has roles in the upcoming horror films *We Are Still Here* and *Love Sick*. She has also embraced the burgeoning world of horror fandom—a world that has evolved noticeably since she was but a part of it.

"I finally realized that I'm part of a club I never knew I belonged to," she says. "When we did *Re-Animator* and that first came out, I got awesome reviews from [prominent film critics] Roger Ebert and Pauline Kael, and that was nice, but we weren't written about that much. Now there are so many outlets for people to talk about their love of horror movies, and there are so many places you can go to watch new horror directors, and companies making these awesome movies. There are so many more movies you get to see and enjoy, and so many people get to enjoy them together. It's opened up a whole community that I feel like I'm a part of now."

THE CELEBRATED FANTASIST DISCUSSES HIS
DEBUT FEATURE, CRONOS

GUILLERMO DEL TORO

by PAUL BROWN

THese days it's hard to find a more productive figure in cinema than writer/director Guillermo del Toro.

Flush from the success of *Pan's Labyrinth*, the *Hellboy* series and *Pacific Rim*, del Toro currently has more horror films in various stages of development than some studios. It's a position that most genre directors can only dream of being in.

Del Toro announced his presence on the international horror scene with his 1993 debut feature, *Cronos*. It's the tale of Jesse Gris, an antique dealer who discovers the rare Cronos device—a golden, scorpion-shaped artifact built centuries earlier by an alchemist, which contains a live insect trapped within it. The device infects him with a form of vampirism that gradually transforms the kindly grandfather into a ghoulish blood-drinker. Relentlessly pursued by a violent thug (Ron Perlman) whose wealthy, dying uncle covets the Cronos device,

he's cared for by the only other person that knows his secret, his mute granddaughter, who hides him away in her toy box. In keeping with del Toro's subsequent tender depictions of children, she sees the monster for who he really is and loves him without question.

Though he wrote *Cronos* while in his early twenties, del Toro wasn't able to bring his vision to the screen for nearly a decade.

"I have been obsessed with vampires since I was very young," he acknowledges. "I used to read a lot of treatises on Eastern European vampire lore and I was very interested in reformulating it as a Catholic retelling of the myth. I also was interested in alchemy at the time and I found a lot of striking similarities between the alchemical process and the process of resurrection. So, I started to just jam those three things together."

Like many debut features, *Cronos* set a career path. The obsession with detail, expressive colour schemes, fairy tale imagery and poetic approach to horror found in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth* are evident here, along with the inherent pulpiness and very humour found in *Blade 2* and *Hellboy*. At its core, *Cronos* is a monster movie, but like almost everything that has followed in del Toro's oeuvre, it's not a simple tale of a costumed teen-terrorist, but of a sympathetic outcast who serves as a painful reflection of human nature.

"I was never interested in doing a regular vampire tale," says del Toro of his approach. "I didn't even use the word 'vampire' as the movie was progressing. I was interested in actually having people work with the movie. *Cronos* is not for people who like their stories predigested. It's a movie that requires a partnership with the



audience because it is in the mind of the audience that the word 'vampire' will come out. Mover in the film."

Del Toro specifically avoided most of the conventions of the creatures that he had studied for years. He sought to create what he describes as a Third World working-class vampire.

"I was very interested in making this vampire more of a victim or a poor devil vampire rather than a magnificent creature of mythology. I wanted him to sleep in a toy box, be full of self-doubt and really weak. I wanted him to lick the blood from the floor of a bathroom and belong not in an aristocratic family in a castle in Eastern Europe but in a middle-class family in a middle-class neighbourhood in Mexico City. Like in most any movie that I do, I was trying to make the monster sympathetic."

The contrast of innocent childhood love with sympathetic monsters – an idea del Toro would return to again in *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, his most critically lauded works – has its roots in early childhood. He grew up with an overbearing religious grandmother who was so terrified by his dark, miscester-fuelled imagination that she had him exorcised multiple times as a child. However, he loved her despite her flaws and chose to represent

it in the film through the dynamic between Jesus and his over-protective grandmother.

"We had a very difficult relationship, but a very loving relationship," recalls del Toro. "My grandmother was the one who instilled the fear of Hell in me and all the things that made my childhood unhappy. But, I loved her nevertheless and I thought it was really fascinating how unconditional the love of a child is for his parents or grandparents. How we don't question their flaws. I really wanted to do *Cronos* as a metaphor, where the little girl loves her grandfather blindly."

The film maker knew very clearly what the film would be from the beginning, but had a difficult time convincing others that it should be made. One of the major challenges was the fact that, without much of a thriving genre film industry in Mexico at the time he completed the screenplay, there was no company that

could achieve the complex effects that his script required. His solution was simple: with no one else running an effects company suitable for his needs, he would simply start his own.

"My wife and I got into a very bad motorcycle accident, and when I was in bed recovering I started sketching and sketching, and then I applied for a makeup





cause that Dick Smith was teaching, I decided after the accident that I was going to create an effects company in order to service *Cronos*, and then immediately after that I was going to close the company," remembers del Toro. "It was an eight-year journey making *Cronos* and part of that journey was the fact that I knew in Mexico at that time, when they read the screenplay, they would ask one question: 'How the hell are you going to make it?' And that answer would be a very easy one if people knew by then that I was a movie makeup technician."

The experience led him to work on the short-lived Mexican horror TV series *Nisa Marcada* (1986 to 1989) that would eventually give him his first paying jobs as

writer and director, all while he continued to work on *Cronos*. The show was a breeding ground for Mexican filmmaking talent and would serve as a rite of passage for such illustrious figures as *Grizzly* director Alfonso Cuarón and cinematographer Guillermo Navarro, who would shoot *Cronos* and win an Oscar for his cinematography on *Pee's Labyrinth*. Though embarrassed by some of the material now ("They are really bad because they are made by very young people with very limited resources"), del Toro cherishes the experience and the creative relationships that he took from the series into *Cronos* and the rest of his career.

"It was a huge learning ground for us," he points out. "It is my hope someday to produce a horror anthology TV series, more than anything to be able to shepherd young filmmakers and give them a similar opportunity."

After years spent establishing himself with student work, short films, and his experience on *Nisa Marcada*, del Toro was finally able to put *Cronos* into production. But not without further difficulty.

"It was actually the second most expensive Mexican movie back then, after *Like Water for Chocolate*, and *Cronos* is, I think even now, the most expensive horror movie ever made in Mexico," says del Toro. "It was almost impossible to make this movie. Almost everybody in the Mexican film establishment didn't like the script, but there were also a few very strong supporters of it. It was a battle of many years to get it past the people in the Mexican Institute of Film who really resisted the idea and saw no future in the movie."

When del Toro finally got everything in place to make the film, there were a whole new set of challenges. One

of the major ones was to design and create the Gears device — a prop that needed to be instantly iconic. Fortunately, the filmmaker was able to find several capable craftsmen to bring his blueprints to life.

"We got the design from a very good friend of mine, a painter called Jose Fors," says del Toro. "He designed the exterior of the device. I designed the interior and the lower part of the device. Then we hired a jeweler to sculpt the device in wax like a real jewel. We sculpted the interior and the insect's tail, and my father-in-law mechanized the whole thing. He was the mechanical engineer for all the devices. I designed the mechanisms, but he would create them."

The iconic infernal machine — featured in *Hellboy* creator Mike Mignola's artwork for the cover of Criterion's DVD release — was a beautiful piece of design that also proved to be surprisingly functional as a prop. (It would later be echoed in a few of the props in *Hellboy II*.)

"The idea came from when I was a kid. I remember seeing women wearing what at the time was called 'living jewelry.' They were beetles, very beautiful, metallic iridescent beetles, living ones. They used to screw a gold waistband around the insect and wear it on their chest like a moving piece of jewelry. I thought that was incredibly cool. I've always been fascinated by biology and I always thought that [jynco disease] was very interesting because it came from a little insect. So I thought, wouldn't it be interesting if an insect could spread a disease that was like vampirism?"

Del Toro also wanted to depict the infection "like a Russian [nesting] doll," giving it multiple layers of meaning. On the broadest end of the spectrum he wanted to represent the new presence of NAFTA in Mexico as a form of political vampirism.

"It's very subtle, people will never notice now because the movie is in the past. [Since] the movie was done about two years before NAFTA, we set it two years in the future. We got license plates the way they were going to be two years later, all the signage in the streets was in Russian, Chinese, Spanish and many of the dates on the headlines and the calendars were created to be two years later. I wanted to depict that as the biggest

WHY I LOVE GUILLERMO DEL TORO in *PIB. 2013*

Oh Guillermo del Toro, why do I love thee? Let me count the ways (well, for the sake of space constraints, I'll stick to three).

IMAGINATION

Anyone who has seen even a frame of a Guillermo Del Toro movie can tell you that they are beautiful in their grotesquery. As a filmmaker, he doesn't just create characters and stories. He creates self-contained worlds. Take a trip down the wormhole of the special features section on his Blu-rays or flip through the pages of his *Cabinet of Curiosities* book and you'll see how deep his imaginative runs.

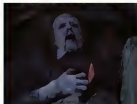


DESIGN

He minutely designs and crafts every monster, set, costume and colour scheme, which allows his imagination to inspire onscreen with a parity and extremity that few filmmakers can match, and also gives each movie a very different and distinct world with rules all its own. When audiences don't even get the comfort of a recognizable reality in horror films, they know instantly that they are in the nightmares of a filmmaker who can, and will, do anything to them.

VERSATILITY

He's a filmmaker who has pushed the genre into the art school realm of personal poetry with *Cronos*, *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, yet was also just as happy to stage great monster versus robot battles or watch Wesley Snipes decapitate the shit out of a vampire. Del Toro is such a student of horror that he appreciates the depth of the art as fully as he does the fun (even sometimes cheap) genre elements. That's part of what makes the anticipation of each new del Toro film so delicious: you're not quite sure what to expect, but you know that whether he's aiming for the art house or dipping in the drive-in, he'll do so with purpose and passion.





"I LOVED WATCHING HIM BECAUSE HE WAS LIKE A THROWBACK TO AN OLD-FASHIONED, TOUGH LEADING MAN LIKE LEE MARVIN. HE WAS A VERY BRUTISH PRESENCE, BUT ALSO A REALLY DELICATE ACTOR."

—CROSES ON PERLMAN

form of vampirism, but I also wanted to show all the way down to the smallest form of vampirism, which is the insect inside the device. The insect is also a slave. It's also being exploited."

Though this artistically subtle side can be seen throughout del Toro's work, there were also the seeds of his pulpy, comic book-style narratives in the film. Specifically, the filmmaker began his working relationship with Ron Perlman, who would go on to star in the *Hellboy* movies and *Pacific Rim*.

"He was always a very interesting character actor," recalls del Toro. "I loved watching him because he was like a throwback to an old-fashioned, tough leading man like Lee Marvin. He was a very brutish presence, but also a really delicate actor. I really liked the way he worked. The two bad guys in *Cronos* were written a little bit cartoony because in American movies the bad Mexican guys are always cartoony and I wanted to have my revenge. I wanted him to play one of them and I met with Ron in Beverly Hills over dinner. He had read the screenplay and was, I think, puzzled by it, but he was definitely intrigued. Over the course of that dinner, I think we struck a friendship and it's a friendship that



thrives to this day."

While *Cronos* didn't get much attention in North America beyond landing its creator a very unhappy job with Dimension Films (directing *Mélieux* is a film which he did a director's cut of in order to restore his original vision), the critical and international filmmaking community welcomed him with open arms. *Cronos* swept the Mexican Academy Awards and landed the prestigious International Critics' Week Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

Years later, del Toro insists that his style of filmmaking has essentially remained the same, however.

"I approach them now in exactly the same way that I approached *Cronos*," he says. "I think that a B-movie needs to be treated with the love that you would give to an A-feature film and that's one of the reasons why the film was so difficult to make. Obviously, I could have done it as a really low-budget Mexican quickie. But I wanted to make it, by the standards of Mexican film, big and unforgettable."

THE CREATOR OF THE EVIL DEAD MUSES ON GOING FROM LOW BUDGET TO HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTER

SAM RAIMI

written by PHIL BROWN

The *Evil Dead* series went from cult oddity to a mainstream success with all the toys, T-shirts, and the musical. What has it been like to see that happen? It's been incredibly surprising. It still continues to amaze and baffle me. It really speaks volumes about the degradation of our society. [Laughs] Bruce Campbell, Rob Tapert and myself had no idea that *Evil Dead* would still be around today. We were just trying to make a film of a high enough quality that it could be shown at the drive-in theaters in Michigan at the time. If it survived that two-month play date from June to August in 1982, we would have been very happy. We had no idea that it would still be playing 30 years later.

You've always seemingly enjoyed torturing your actors on the set.
 Horror movies are a great excuse for tormenting people that act in the film. In [*Dog Me to Hell*], they literally have to take demonic abuse, so it loosens up that director's hand and encourages you to not just throw bits of take concrete at the guy playing Spider-Man. You can warm up with buckets of blood and then really get into more viscous fluids. It's a horror picture.

Is torturing any actor as fun as torturing Bruce Campbell?
 No, he's the best of the bunch to torture. It's almost like he cries out for it.

Did you feel a need to change your approach to horror filmmaking for contemporary audiences?
 I didn't really look at it like, "Should I make the movie the old-fashioned way or should I make it the new way?" I more or less focused on my shot lists and storyboards to try to figure out the best presentation for any particular moment or sequence. Sometimes I used techniques that I learned long ago in my early horror films and other times I used techniques that I learned more recently on these

Spider-Man films. But I didn't make conscious decisions to say, "I need to develop a new technique for this or I'll use an old tool here." It was really just about inspiring the sequence in a particular way and trying to communicate that vision to everyone involved.

In what way do genre trends and fan expectations influence you as a director now?
 I'm aware of some of the individual horror films that come out, but not as a tremendous amount. I do see the popular ones and I like them. I'm probably less aware of the trends from a social point of view and what the movements are, so it's hard to really say how I've been influenced by them. I'm just a product of our society and culture. And, like everyone, I'm influenced by the films I see and the times we live in.

Are there any genre newcomers that have caught your eye lately, and why?
 Oh... um... let's see... [linguistic] I recently saw James Whalen's *Bride of Frankenstein*. That was awesome. I didn't see the whole thing, but I also saw some of Rob Hooper's *Twice Christmas Massacre*. I don't know if you've heard of that one. That's an incredibly well-crafted film.



Evil Dead



THE DIRECTOR OF TARGETS RECALLS THE TIME HE TEAMED UP WITH THE MAN WHO PLAYED FRANKENSTEIN

BOGDANOVICH ON KARLOFF BY STUART F. ANDREWS

WHILE HE'S BEST KNOWN FOR THE 1971 *CLASSIC THE LAST PICTURE SHOW*, MODERN ENTHUSIASTS MAY THINK MORE fondly of Peter Bogdanovich for his 1968 debut feature *Targets*, starring Boris Karloff in what was not only his last great performance on screen but one of the most fascinating roles of his career. And the story behind the film is as compelling as the film itself.

Appearing as a thinly veiled version of himself, Karloff plays Byron Orisk, an embittered humor star who's ready to hang up his cape after realizing his antiquated films can't compete with the real terrors of modern life. He then comes face to face with those horrors when he attends the drive-in premiere of his latest fright flick where a psychotic sniper proceeds to shoot the patrons.

Produced quickly and cheaply by Roger Corman under

some of the most preposterous conditions imaginable, *Targets* has no right to be a decent film, let alone one of the first modern horror masterpieces. That we're still discussing it today stands as testament to the passion and legacy of its brilliant boy-wonder director, who previously worked for Corman in an uncredited capacity as both screenwriter and second unit director on the 1966 biker epic, *The Wild Angels*.

How did the opportunity to make your debut feature with Boris Karloff come along?

Roger was very pleased with my work on *The Wild Angels* and asked me if I wanted to write and direct my own picture. I said, "Yes, of course I would." So he said, "Alright, here's the situation: Boris Karloff owes me two days work. I want you to shoot twenty minutes of new material with Karloff in those two days. You can shoot twenty minutes in two days, I've shot whole pictures in two days! And then shoot with some other actors for ten days and shoot 40 minutes of material with them. Then I want you to take twenty minutes out of *The Terror*, a picture I did with Boris—not a very good picture, but you can find twenty minutes to take out of it. And if you take those twenty minutes and the twenty minutes you shot with Karloff, we'll have forty minutes of Karloff! Then shoot another forty minutes with some other actors and we have a brand-new, 80-minute Karloff picture. Are you interested?"

It's amazing that from such humble origins something so great came along. So how did you devise a narrative based on those conditions?

Well, we were stumped for quite a while. We saw *The Terror* and Roger was being kind when he said it wasn't one





of his best pictures. It's terrible. It was directed by about six people including Francis Ford Coppola, Jack Hill, Roger and three or four others. It's just a hodgepodge. Boris hated it. Polly [Pitt, Bagdasarian's former wife and co-writer] and I looked at the picture and said, "What the fuck are we gonna do with this?" It was dreadful and I couldn't see pulling out five minutes, much less twenty. And we thought Karloff being a heavy in 1967 when he was pushing 80 just didn't seem to really work. We thought of all sorts of things where Karloff could be some kind of stalker, we thought of some kind of murderer in a supermarket. I mean, we were trying to figure out what the hell to do with him. Obviously, we had to kill him in the middle of the picture. It just was a nightmare. Finally, in desperation, one morning I was shaving and thought of a joke, "Okay, I know how to open the picture! We'll start with the end of The Terror and we'll say, 'The End!'" The lights will come up in the projection room. Boris Karloff will be sitting there right next to Roger Corman. He will turn to Roger and will say, "Roger! That is by far the worst film I've ever seen!" Then I thought, "That's funny. That's interesting." I laughed thinking about it and then thought, "Wait a second. That's not a bad idea! What if he's an actor and he's a horror movie actor like Boris Karloff? Then we don't have to worry about him being a heavy. We'll kill him somewhere in the middle of the picture but he can be kind of like Boris Karloff and he's quitting the business because his kind of movies aren't horrible anymore."



ion because he knew how to make pictures for very little money and also was a great story mind. ... So I go over to his house and he started packing up and down his living room and says, "Why did you kill Karloff in the middle of the picture?" I said, "Cause I've only got him for two days, Sammy." "Aright, look! Never think about limitations when you're writing a script. Never! If you have him for two days or twenty days, that doesn't matter. Write it the way you want it and you worry about the other thing later. Just write it!" I went back, rewrote the script and gave it to Roger. Roger said, "This is the best script I've ever had to produce, but you'll have to cut some stuff because you can't possibly shoot all that with Boris in two days." I said, "Roger! You just said it was the best script you'd ever read. How can I change it?" "Well, I'm not gonna pay for extra time for Boris, there's no way you can shoot that in two

While he wasn't credited, director Sam Fuller also worked on the script. What did he contribute?
I gave the script to Sam Fuller and asked him for his opin-

days." That was his first position, but he slowly came around and paid for Boris for a total of five days. So we had Boris for five days and worked him really hard from eight or nine in the morning often until nine, ten or twelve at night.

I believe that the relationship between Roger Corman and Boris Karloff wasn't completely friendly. Is that true?

That's true. Boris didn't particularly like Roger. Roger could be a little bit abrasive if he's making a picture and he gets antsy if he's running behind. Or maybe he and Boris didn't get along, I really don't know. I just know that Boris was not fond of Roger. But Roger never came on the set. Boris would say, "I'm doing this for you, Peter."

What was Karloff like to work with?

He was a prince. He loved the script, he loved the part. Though he was very cute. He said to me when I spoke to him from London for the first time, "Since I'm playing an actor, a person very much like myself, do I have to say such terrible things about myself?" And I said, "Well, I feel that the audience is so sympathetic to you that no matter what you say against yourself, the audience will say, 'No, it's not true.'" He said, "Well, I hope so." I said, "I think the more rough you are on yourself, the more the audience will be sympathetic." He said every line as I wrote it. Some he rushed a little bit 'cause he wasn't happy with the line but he did say every line and didn't change any. He added some stuff which was good. He was brilliant. He was wonderful to work with. It was difficult because he had emphysema and he had braces on both legs and he was an old 70. He had trouble breathing and so on and so forth.

One of the things I love about the character of Byron Orick is that he's grown to hate every minute of the movie business. But the real Boris Karloff didn't feel that way. So tell me about the differences between the two personalities.

Well, Boris would never quit because he loved it too much. He loved being on the set and shooting. He was a pro. It was his second home, it was his first home—he spent more time on movie sets than he did in his home. And his wife was with him and that was what he did. I don't want to say he was pragmatic but he was pretty down to earth. I asked him once how he felt about being typed as the Monster from the *Frankenstein* pictures and he said, "The Monster?" He said he's very thankful to the Monster because the Monster gave him a niche and he's had a career as a result. He was very humble about that and a wonderful actor. So looking back on it now, without Boris Karloff there would never have been a *Terget* because he had to be a horror movie star for the whole thing to work and mesh.

There's a great monologue in which Orick is reflecting on his own mortality. Of course, Karloff would be gone within just a couple of years from this point so, really, this was his swan song.

I whispered in his ear just before we did the take, "When you get to the end, just think about your own death." He said, "Alright." It was outrageous of me just to do it that casually but he wasn't fazed at all. He did it. He had tears in his eyes and I went over to [his wife] Eric Karloff and she had tears in her eyes. She said, "Do you know how long it's been since a crew applauded for Boris?"



AN FX ARTIST WITH CREDITS ON THE FUNHOUSE, POLTERGEIST AND THE GATE SHARES HIS MEMORIES OF WORKING WITH A MAKEUP PIONEER ON THE PSYCHEDELIC SHOCKER ALTERED STATES

CRAIG REARDON

ON

DICK SMITH

by MICHAEL BOYLE

*Tell me about assisting Dick Smith on *Altered States*.*
I'd known Dick through a very fortunate connection I made as early as 1988 after I'd seen his address. He'd invited me to correspond with him, which was the furthest thing from my expectations. It was like a dream. I so admired Dick's unique and advanced notions in makeup—both his technological mastery and his idiosyncratic take on design and conceptualization. *Altered States* required of him all that he'd become known for in that regard. His ideas transformed to some extent what was latent in [author/screenwriter] Paddy Chayefsky's script. This is the most that any makeup artist can do—understand and translate the written material and enhance and convey it in visual terms to an audience. To see Dick's working method, and to make some contributions of my own, was a great experience and honor.

What kind of a person was he to work for?

Dick could be a very difficult taskmaster and there were times when I was disappointed, hurt, even bewildered by some of his reactions and directives—I'll be frank about that. But in the greater sense, I was not disappointed at all. What he managed to direct and personally come up with was a typically innovative number of solutions to the extraordinary demands of Chayefsky's story, and I was his only assistant on set during the shoot in the summer and early autumn of 1979. I participated in the application and operation of some techniques that were unprecedented in the craft and continued to influence it for nearly the next 30 years.

How would you sum up Smith's contribution to the art of makeup FX?

The way to sum up Dick's contribution is to say that he is largely responsible—by himself—for creating the very notion of special makeup effects. His own ingenuity and gumption in taking on challenges that would have been unorthodox to most makeup men—even some special ef-

fects men—and his success in pulling them off soon made him the go-to guy during the 1970s and well into the 1980s. One cannot think of *The Godfather*, *The Exorcist*, *Taxi Driver* or *Altered States* without reckoning on the impact of his contributions to these influential films—which do not minimize the movie away from its story, its performers, nor its director, but instead enhances the contributions of all three. His artistry was to successfully simulate reality and convince anyone of the apparent reality of things that were utterly fantastic. There have been many wonderful makeup artists in the history of cinema, but none were more influential, nor remotely as skillful and versatile, as Dick Smith. To die, he is one of the true pioneers in the history of film.



THE MOST FAMOUS FACE OF BRITISH HORROR
REMINISCES ON A FEW OF HIS LANDMARK ROLES

CHRISTOPHER LEE

INTERVIEW BY DEJAN UGNJANOVIĆ



*Despite a large and diverse filmography, most people know you best from your roles in horror movies such as Hammer's *Count Dracula* and *The Dracula Bloods*. How do you feel about that?*

I'd been an actor for ten years and I was learning — going to different countries, saying a few lines, very small parts — and then I did *A Tale of Two Cities*, which was a very big and famous part. At that time, Hammer Films was starting work on its *Frankenstein* film. They wanted a very tall man. I had problems before because I was taller than the stars. If I were born an American, it would've been a different matter, but British stars were mostly smaller than me. I couldn't get a job, so I decided to lose, watching people around me on those sets. People like David Lean and Carol Reed working their actors. Then along comes a character who doesn't speak, who has to be very tall, and I understood a lot about movement. [The week before], me and my wife had watched on television

the original *Frankenstein*, from 1931, with my dear friend Boris Karloff. So many people have made mistakes about his performance. They believe he just lumbered around, making "Boom! Boom! Boom!" [groans] with his heavy feet. But that is not so. He behaves like a bewildered child who didn't ask to be brought to life. He doesn't know who he is or where he came from, he has a bad brain — you know the incident with the good brain being dropped — and so the brain doesn't really work, he moves like a child, and so did I in that role. After that, I did *Dracula*. And so it happened that after those, my name and face became known all over the world. But I did not do as many horror films as people think. In my own opinion, a *Pepe Le Pew* film is not horror.

Yes, it is more like a dark fantasy.

Yes, fantasies, absolutely fantasies. Like fairy stories. I never tried to frighten people. I've met people who would come to me and say, "Oh, when I was young I saw that film and I was scared for days." I never tried to frighten people. I tried to make them feel sorry for those characters. I used the phrase, "the loneliness of evil." And it is true.

*If of the many films you've done, you've named *The Wicker Man* as your favorite. Why is that?*

I think it's the best picture I've ever been in. It is a good story, and it is not what the audience is expecting to see. The ending is very frightening, yet it's completely logical, because we are pagans and it has to be like that. The crops have failed, and we have to have a virgin sacrifice. I think it was a wonderful script by Anthony Shaffer.

Frankenstein

1959, Hammer



Did you approach the role of Lord Summerisle as a villain, or did you try to defend him?

He's very charming, he's smiling, he can be very amusing. At the same time, he knew what he had to do so that the islanders would have a good crop that year, because the one before was a bad one.

Do you have any memories of Merlo Sava, especially from the making of *The Whip* and the *Body*, one of his – and your – best films?

Merlo Sava was very funny, but I don't think that he was a very happy man. He used to come from behind the camera before he said, "Cut!" Me and Dalish Lavi had a love scene together, and he came into it, and started making faces.

You were friends with British novelist Dennis Wheatley, and you starred in two films – 1967's *The Devil Rides Out* and 1978's *To the Devil a Daughter* – based on his novels.

The first one was very good, the second one wasn't. I would like to make *The Devil Rides Out* again. A lot of people would like to remake it. I could still play that part, with a different cast. And what you could do with special effects, with CGI, that would be fantastic. In those days when we made it, the effects were quite crude. [*To the Devil a Daughter*] was a big mistake. Part of it was right, but the ending was nonsense.

Was the script changed after you agreed to do the film?

Yes. Because Richard Widmark, who was one of the last pants of cinema, has a scene at the end. I'm going to

sacrifice the girl [*Catherine*, played by Mercedes Kinski], and I draw this circle with blood. Anyone who crosses it is dead. Richard throws a flint stone at me. It has something to do with the story; it is the only way to cross that barrier, I don't know why. I'm there with a knife. And he comes across the circle, because he's on the side of God. He walks over, throws the stone, I fall on the ground, he picks the girl up, and he walks out of the circle. I come back, and I see what's happening and I run after him. And I forget that I'm going over that circle. Then lightning strikes me – God, or divine retribution, or what you like. But they didn't show that. Somebody said, "Oh, but he's done that before." Not very intelligent. This change spoiled the film. Dennis Wheatley was very unhappy about it, whereas he loved *The Devil Rides Out*.

This one is really one of your best films.

It's a very good film, it's ahead of its time, because it is about black magic, which still exists. Devil worship, Satanism, call it what you like.

Do you feel any regret for being associated with this genre, which is considered inferior, of lesser importance?

It isn't considered lower, just look at the number of those pictures that are being made. In my opinion, there are too many. The thing about my films is that they were not very realistic. You knew those things couldn't happen. And my job was to convince the audience that they could. In the last few years, maybe even twenty years, the films they've been making in what they call the horror genre – they show everything. The blood is all over the screen and it is awful.



The Wicker Man

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE DIRECTOR LOOKS BACK ON HIS GROUNDBREAKING SHOCKER

TOBE HOOPER

BY AARON WILLIAMS

FORTY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE TOBE HOOPER'S TITANIC TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE BOARED ONTO SCREENS IN OCTOBER OF 1974. TCM would join films such as Dennis Hooper's *Easy Rider* (1969) and Terrence Malick's *Badlands* (1973) in the American New Wave as collated reflections of a troubled national landscape—a time when the free-love hippie movement was brought to an ugly end by the Manson Family murders of August 1969. For audiences, it was no longer safe anywhere, thanks in part to a cross-dressing, chainsaw-wielding maniac with a penchant for wearing masks fashioned from human skin. Before there was Michael Myers or Jason Voorhees or Freddy Krueger, there was Leatherface.

Partly inspired by the heinous crimes of real-life murderer Ed Gein, TCM tore through the psyches of shocked audiences, bringing a new level of grim realism to horror

films. Some viewers weren't ready for it, during the film's initial run, censors in London famously slapped it with a ban that would remain in place until 1986.

Hooper went on to become the stuff of genre legend, with career highlights that include the Spielberg-produced *Naanster Pottergeist* (1982), the Don O'Bannon-permuted *L.A. Force* (1985), the widely celebrated, four-hour television adaptation of Stephen King's vampire nightmare *Salem's Lot* (1979), and the severely underrated *Toolbox Murders* (2004).

Hooper recently checked in with *Rue Morgue* to give some fresh insight on his most famous work, and even offer his two cents on the state of the industry today.

In filmmaking something that you've always wanted to do?

Absolutely. I was watching movies from [when I was] a few months old—a few days old, probably. It's all I ever wanted to do. I loved everything, from the swash-buckling, *Spartanouche* film genre to *Ben-Hur*—David Lean especially, and Alfred Hitchcock. I loved films that involved me. At an early age, the entire thing involved me. I would just get caught up in images. I just love film.

What were your initial feelings about starting work on *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*?

I set out to make a horror film. We didn't have much then *Godzilla*, *Mothra*—there were a lot of B-horror films around, and they weren't very scary. I wanted to do something that reflected the fears I had as a child—completing tales, stories I would hear from relatives who loved to scare the hell out of me. I wanted to do some-



thing that played out like that, and didn't quite know what it was. We were in a line in the early '70s when there was a kind of gasoline rationing. That led me to [the idea of] isolation in the woods, that a group of students are going out into an area and they run out of gas, become isolated and get into trouble. The original thinking was that it was going to be more of a fantastic kind of thing, like a house that had metaphysical powers, and I thought, "I've seen that." I think watching the news, particularly the news from San Antonio, Texas — it was so graphic, at least in spirit — it slowly started coming to me. Then the story came to me in a flash, about someone who couldn't escape the problem they were in. As soon as they got out, they would run right back into another spiderweb and break free of that spiderweb and run into another

Were you surprised by the reactions to the film's violence?

No, I would get advice from the MPAA (about how do I do this and get a G rating? If I was asking the question, I'm hanging around, if you have a victim from a methook, how do you go about getting it shown? They would say, "You can't!" Not graphically, anyway. They would say it's implied - if you don't see any of the hook and all of that - that it might work. At least I had a feeling I could get an R-rated movie. There's a lot in it where people think they're blood and pore but they don't, because all the conventions and set-ups are there, like hanging Pore from a methook and having the camera tilt down to a washub underneath her dancing legs.

So would that scene have been much bloodier if you hadn't had to run it past the MPAA?

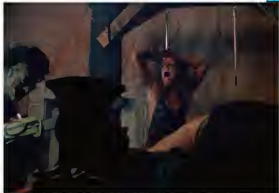
No, I thought I could give you just as much if the energy was right coming from the characters. The actors felt real. The sound of truth, the behaviour of truth and violence, would transcend and go into your head in a different kind of way. Go in kind of totally, like music – straight into the emotions. An out-of-body experience.

**Who will survive
and what
will be
left of
them?**



THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

What happened is true. Now the entire picture, they just as well





in watching a film was something I was always really interested in, occasionally, watching a film as a young man, I would kind of lose consciousness of the fact that I was watching a film for a matter of half a second, maybe 48 frames or even two seconds. I kind of left myself, I went with it. There was a magic I discovered about cinema that I wanted to build on. I wanted to try to create longer and longer moments of that kind of involvement, where you forget everything but the film. That's one of the things I was trying to do with *Chain-saw*. I respected cinema as an art form in the late '60s and '70s.

How different is the film industry today compared to those days?

Everything has to be explained. They want to make damn sure you know exactly what you're watching rather than let you discover what you're watching. That may come from actually not knowing how to read a script, or becoming impatient with making a screenplay. The question that you have from a good film is always answered in the next scene or the scene after that, or collectively. It seems to be that there is a fear that audiences won't understand that kind of communication. It could be that testing in theatres and doing two or



"THEY'VE SEEN IT ALL. ONCE YOU'VE TURNED THE HUMAN BODY INSIDE OUT SO MANY TIMES..."

By Jerry Dodge

Three things at one time may figure into this, and I would hope that the audience can do the thing that he or she paid ten to fifteen dollars to do, which is to watch the movie. I think things have very much changed. It changed from the '80s — take a date to a movie and if there's a moment that isn't explained, your date will ask, "What's going on?" I've had this happen to me a lot. Five or six times, your date or your friend is punching you in the side and asking you what's going on and it's like, "Watch the film and the film will tell you!"

Do you think it's becoming harder to shock audiences?

I think so. I think they're saturated. They've seen it all. Once you've turned the human body inside out so many times — I think the shock now should come from a much deeper place than just the fear of someone being slaughtered or coming to a bad end. So yeah, I totally think it's harder to shock an audience, and they have to be shocked the right way. You simply need a new roller-coaster design. I say "simply," but it's not really simple at all. There's a science behind it.

Has there been anything out there lately that has impressed you?

There are things out there that I have seen that I do get jump-scares out of, and jump-scares don't necessarily have to carry something new or gory with them and I think that is important. I think that the quantity of the jumps is important because finally it makes the audience nervous. It makes them vulnerable. I just kind of feel that sending a new idea through, sending a new concept through the

WHY I LOVE TOBE KOOPER

by RAIN WILLIAMS

Five iconic scenes from Tobe Hooper's filmography demonstrate why he's a master of horror.

1. INTRODUCING LEATHERFACE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Hooper stirs the image of the towering, twisted Leatherface into the minds of generations to come when poor Kirk is bludgeoned with a sledgehammer and left twitching. I'll never forget the sound of his legs knocking against the floor and the loud swash of that metal door. No cory score chords or protracted build up, just shock and awe.

2. PAMS DENISE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

As Pam wanders deeper into the cannibal house she stumbles upon human remains and then Leatherface himself. No soundtrack other than her screams of panic as she's hoisted over the villain's shoulder, carried into the kitchen and impaled on a meat hook. Wicked, utterly sickening and completely nightmarish.

3. THEY'RE HERE: POLTERGEIST

In the scene that caused a generation of kids to develop an irrational fear of their television sets, Carol Anne wakes one night and wanders downstairs to find her father asleep in front of a station-free TV. An unknown presence in the set beckons her over to have a conversation with a voice that only she can hear.



4. LEFTY VS. LEATHERFACE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

Hooper takes TCM to a midcap direction as Lefty (the incomparable Dennis Hooper in full bonkers mode) takes on the entire Sawyer family, culminating in a deliciously fun chainsaw duel that showcases the director's macabre sense of humor.

5. SALLY'S ESCAPE: THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE

A blood-soaked Sally makes her escape thanks to a good Samaritan in a pickup truck. As it pulls away with Leatherface giving chase, Sally's relief turns to hysteria as she proceeds to laugh uncontrollably, encapsulating the madness of the movie.

screen into the mind of the audience to process, is something that needs a little work. Their involvement is the most important thing, meaning their investment is what they are watching.

Would you ever direct another Texas Chainsaw film?

You know, I don't know. I just don't know. It could happen.

Finally, what advice would you give to potential future filmmakers out there?

Really study film — go back and watch old movies, watch the history of movies. Whether you like them or you don't, you appreciate films that are now called "classic films," so as a filmmaker you really have a connection to the image, to the history. You know where to go. You actually have some kind of appreciation for how the whole history of cinema has come down. You know, as a filmmaker, where it all came from.



THE DIRECTOR OF *MANIAC*, THE *MANIAC* COP SERIES AND FOUNDER OF *BLUE UNDERGROUND* RIFFS ON GRINDHOUSE FILMMAKING

WILLIAM LUSTIG

by GEORGE PACHECO



Your films were obviously greatly affected by growing up in New York during the grindhouse era. What was that like?

I'm very grateful to have grown up in the New York of the 1970s. I was in my teens, and it was a really amazing period in the city's history. The city was visually bankrupt, crime was rampant and it was a totally different place than it is today. People who grew up around this time will never forget it; it was a period unlike any in the city's history. You had serial killers on the loose like the Son of Sam, there were a couple of blockades, a garbage strike... your name is it, it was going on. Prostitution was very out in the open. Where I live today in New York used to be a drug market. It was a different place.

***Maniac* embodies that down 'n' dirty era; did you have any idea that it would become such a classic? No, not at all. The person who did was [star] Joe Spinell. He was conflicted, and believed without hesitation, that the movie would become a classic.**

***Maniac* was remade recently and a redo of *Maniac Cop* is in the works too. How do you feel about remakes?**

I'm not a big fan of remakes. I think the better films to remakes are the ones which, for one reason or another, weren't successful, and someone comes up with an idea that improves on what was a failed original. For the most part, however, I find that remakes are unnecessary. I think what we're trying to do with *Maniac Cop* is basically explore the legend of the character, rather than being a straight scene-for-scene remake, in the same way *Maniac* is not a scene-for-scene remake.

What was your biggest challenge in starting *Blue Underground*?

Finances! [Laughs] We wanted to do as much and we only had so much to spend. Later, it's become finding movies

that are worth putting out because it's not a renewable resource being in the catalogue business. I'm not in the new release business so that's the challenge companies like mine are faced with today. There have been many films [we couldn't release] for various reasons. It could be that somebody outbid me or the materials weren't up to my specs. There's a lot of detective work, in what we do, especially with many of these films being 30 or 40 years old. One of the most difficult was tracking down the original camera negative for Fulci's *Zombi*. That took about two years.

What would you say have been your career highlights as both a filmmaker and a distributor?

My proudest moment as a director was *Maniac Cop 2*. That was a time when I felt I really got what I was aiming for. As far as *Blue Underground* goes, there have been many of those moments. One of my favourite films we put out was a little-known Italian film called *La morte*, which I thought was terrific. We did a great featurette for the release.





RUE MORGUE WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE
THE FINAL CONVERSATION WITH ICONIC HORROR HOST
MAILA NURMI, BETTER KNOWN AS

VAMPIRA

BY DAVE ALEXANDER



IN THE HORROR GENRE, WOMEN ARE SEEN
MUCH MORE OFTEN THAN THEY'RE HEARD.

and usually in a state of stress or undress. So just imagine what the climate was like six decades ago when Vampira made her debut as the world's first television horror host.

The ghoulie character was the alter ego of pin-up model and then-aspiring actress Maila Nurmi, born Maila Elizabeth Niemi (her father anglicized the Finnish family name from "Syrjäniemi") in Gloucester, Massachusetts—not Finland, as was often claimed—on December 15, 1922. Nor was she related to Finnish Olympic Paavo Nurmi, as he often stated (she chose to go with the last name Nurmi).

After making her way to Hollywood in 1953, she attended a masquerade party in a dark, foam-filling gothic dress with a plunging neckline that emphasized her unbelievably tiny waist and complemented her jet-black wig and pale makeup. Based on Charles Addams' comic character Morticia Addams (a fact she was always quick to acknowledge), her vamp creation led to her being hired to introduce horror movies for LA TV station KACB-TV. Her husband at the time, Hollywood screenwriter Dean Riesner, dubbed his wife's worded voice creation "Vampira" and Nurmi moulded her into a more sexual, campy and ultimately campy version of Morticia—a ghoul girl with a potent personality and plenty to say. Viewers were immediately captivated by *The Vampira Show*.

Before this, Lon Chaney, Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff had been packaged as horror personalities, but until Vampira, a woman's place in horror was relegated mainly to victim. Elsa Lanchester (*Bride of Frankenstein*) was as close as horror had come to cultivating its own female personality. Only Nurmi actively shaped herself—horribly,

by binding her waist—into something needed to take a bite out of polite society.

Unlike typical horror heroines in the movies (think Fay Wray), she wasn't just an object to be looked at as she screamed in terror. Instead, she looked back at the audience, staring into the camera as she shrieked, slinked through fake fog and told morbid jokes. Because it was live TV and her segments weren't recorded for posterity, only a brief clip from a promo reel remains. There are however plenty of photographs, as Nurmi kept up an aggressive promotional regime, including a photo spread in the June 1954 edition of *LIFE* magazine. She also hit the town in costume, and regularly hung out with James Dean (at times she was also acquainted with Marilyn Monroe, Elvis, Anthony Perkins, and dated Orion Welles and Marlon Brando). Vampira tirelessly promoted herself to the emerging Monster Kid generation, and claimed to have a massive fan club.

However, despite—or perhaps more accurately because of—her popularity, *The Vampira Show* was cancelled when Nurmi refused to give up control of the character to the station. Although a version of it resurfaced briefly on a competing network, she was blackballed.

Before long, Nurmi was out of work and broke, and she would've retreated a bit on the genre radar, if not, ironically, for agreeing to appear in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. Put off by the terrible dialogue but needing the \$200 per day that the job paid, she agreed to play the role, but only as a non-speaking part.

After *Plan 9*, Nurmi appeared in a few more low-budget films before leaving acting and opening an antiques shop in Hollywood. In the '60s there was an attempt to resur-

rect *The Vampire Show*, with Nurni serving as an executive producer, but she left the project when Cassandra Peterson (a.k.a. Elvira) became involved. In the late '80s Nurni unsuccessfully sued Peterson over her similar "Mistress of the Dark" persona. While Elvira became a pop-culture icon, earning big money for Peterson, Nurni lived on social security payments. Even though *Vampirella* had also inspired Forrest J Ackerman's illustrated *Vampirella* character, was immortalized in several songs, including The Mafias' "Vampire" and "Plan 9 Channel 7" by

The Damned, and her (albeit poor) image was appearing on mugs and more posters, T-shirts, etc., Nurni herself lived in relative obscurity.

It's no surprise then that she was rather solitary in her later years and loved animals more than people. This misanthropic image was perhaps tempered, though, by a resurgence in her popularity sparked on by both the resurrection of *Plan 9* as the best bad movie ever made and Tim Burton's 1994 feature *Ed Wood*, in which Lisa Marie played *Vampirella*/Nurni.

Nurni granted interviews, appeared at conventions, was able to license *Vampirella*'s likeness, launched an official website, and even got back in front of the camera. Appropriately, her last film appearance was in the 1996 Ed Wood-scripted *I Wake Up Early the Day I Die*. Most recently, she was the subject of the documentary *Vampirella: The Movie*. On January 10, 2008, she died from natural causes at age 85.

As those close to the outspoken, opinionated and often caustic Nurni attest, she had much to say about anything and everyone, and she could be her own worst enemy. She held grudges, refused to compromise and wasn't afraid to exaggerate. Her death warranted a barely a men-

Plan 9 From Outer Space



"I TRIED TO BEHAVE AS THOUGH I WAS REAL, NOT A CHARACTER IN COSTUME BUT A REAL STRANGE WOMAN WHO LIVES ALONE AND WHO ONLY COMES OUT TO LEAVE FLOWERS FOR SOMEBODY LONG DEAD."

—LISA MARIE NURNI



tion in the mainstream media. In many ways Maita Nurmí was a tragic, self-sabotaging figure punished for not playing by the rules.

Yet *Vampira* was a true trailblazer — the first TV horror host, beamed into people's homes as a mysterious, alluring modiste of sex, death and female empowerment, who tempered those uncomfortable notions with sheer wit and mesmerizing charm. Her defying goth pin-up girl look and piercing gaze was wickedly subversive in an era of staunch repression. After all, there just might be things hiding behind that smile.

But let's give her the last word, as *Rue Morgue* pays tribute to a truly original horror personality, in *Vampira's* first interview.

If you could do it all again and recreate the character, would you change anything?

Not that I know of. And it was not all my creation. Like when a chef makes a famous dish to eat, there is something and things he knows from history. Everything comes into the creation, my inspirations were manifold. I worked on it and some of it was accidental. Morticia didn't have a name so I was "Mrs. Addams" at first. And that was what I was trying to sell. But when the local station brought me in they said they couldn't afford to do the whole Addams Family. So if it was going to be the one character, I had to change it. So I added the bondage and discipline. I know that in and it wasn't intended. I was only going to emulate Morticia, but that became very different from *Vampira*. So the whole thing came together incidentally — the creature that she was. A Victorian, madly dominant! A strange mixture. I didn't design that intellectually, it just came about.

Before *The Vampire Show*, you'd go out and about in Hollywood in-character. How did people react?

Well, the first time that I went out at all was downtown in Los Angeles, and there were tall buildings and office workers in them then. Office workers would have a break at lunch, and they would have to go out of the building and out on the street to get lunch, so a lunch-coffee, you know, because that was the way the world was structured here. So I knew, I was aware that the streets were crowded just like Manhattan, crowded with people walking to and from lunch, thousands of people, so we rented a car to tour the city and go down to Pershing Square. My driver, who looked a little like an undertaker, pulled up in front and unveiled a red carpet and I picked up a bouquet of lilies and walked in a trance — not seeing the people — over to [one of the statues in the Square] of my "beloved" put the flowers there and people were startled. They stopped and stared, they were frightened and they were mystified because I wasn't on the air yet. They didn't know what it was. And I tried to behave as though I was real, not a character in costume.

WHY I LOVE VAMPIRA

by DAVID ALLEN

"Sex and death." I thought that was a good combination. That's how Maita Nurmí once described the genesis of *Vampira*. Taking the "death" from Charles Addams' Morticia character and infusing it with the blatant sexuality of a pin-up (she was one), Nurmí's subversive persona evolved from a gimmick to one of the most empowering female figures in the genre. Here are three mediums in which she staked a claim as a horror culture pioneer.

MOVIES

Vampira's appearance and demeanor were so arresting that even a wordless role in "the world's worst movie" was enough to make her an icon. The Bride from *Bride of Frankenstein* (1923), *Maya in Dracula's Daughter* (1936) and (rose from *Cal People* (1942) are beautiful moorles but full of self-killing. *Vampira*, however, came along and owned her darkness. The "Vampire Girl" in *Plan 9 from Outer Space* is sly, deadly and full of intent.

TELEVISION

As the world's first horror host, she concocted the formula for being playful, campy, spooky and theatrical. Though little footage from *The Vampire Show* exists, what does remain demonstrates that it introduced the horror-host staples of candle-lit, cobwebs, coffins and naked crows, as well as the element of viewer interactivity via answering viewer letters on air.

ARTISTRY

Though her tailored black dress was cribbed from Morticia, the wickedly arched eyebrows, long fingertips and pale foundation combo was all Nurmí, and has been embraced by goth girls almost as much as Betty Page bangs. And as far as hairstyles go, *Vampira* was the first to sport a devil look, prefiguring the Modits, who paid tribute to her style with the song "Vampira" ("Two-inch salted-worms with a pale white feline face/bedazzled eyebrows to there").



but a real strange woman who lives alone and who only comes out to leave flowers for somebody long dead. Then I got back in the car and he rolled up the red carpet and we left. Thousands of people were stunned, mystified, and then they took me to meet a Hollywood columnist. He was with one of the big newspapers. I knew him personally, when I was a hot-check girl he was a regular customer of mine, maybe two years earlier. So now I was not revealing my identity beneath all the makeup, you know. So my producer said, "Well, I'm bringing a woman for you to interview and you know her, but I'm not telling you who she is, so you have to figure that out." I was brought into his office and he couldn't figure out who I was. He said, "I don't know you." I said, "Indeed you do, you know me very well." He tried to figure it out but he couldn't for the life of him. We had a dinner date at Ciro's, and he still couldn't figure out who I was. I finally said who I was and he said, "No, you're not her, she's a Russian princess." He was one of my favorite columnists. Even when LIFE magazine interviewed me, they called me by my full name. Masha Strydomer, the name on my birth certificate. He still couldn't believe that it was I, Masha Muma, the most publicized person besides President Eisenhower. It felt like that.

Just how popular was Vampira during your tenure as a horror host?

Well, when I first went on the show in 1954, it was the first time that a local TV show had developed fan clubs all over the world, it had never happened before. The paparazzi were much smaller and I didn't have any paparazzi to speak of, but lots and lots of [promotional]

photography, and just from the still photographs they got excited. All kinds of people, all over the world.

Since there is almost no archival footage of the show, tell us about your performance.

I was hypnotizing the camera. It was like home cooking. I would tell the camera man to come closer, closer, closer. I would tell him, "Just focus in on my eyes," and then I'd stare into the camera and pretend I was staring into the eyes of my lover. I am a hypnotist. I hypnotized silently without saying anything. "You're fascinated, you're fascinated. You'll come back to the camera, you'll come back to the camera," I was saying silently. People would have parties on Saturday nights, and they'd turn on *The Vampira Show* and not listen, they'd have it on in the bedrooms, so people could be entertaining themselves in the living room and somebody would be stationed listening in the bedroom and tell everyone when the commercials are going on and they'd come in to see the commercial. And then the newspapers were writing about that, how people were running at to see the show. I was hypnotizing them and they didn't know it — physically, mentally intending to do it. Not just generating it, but deliberately intending to do it. Maybe that was part of it, staring into the camera that way. I had been for fifteen years before that a monologist, so I knew how to handle my crowds. So I was handling my crowds. Or trying to, and I guess it was working.

You spent a lot of time in the Vampira costume. Did you ever injure yourself trying to maintain that signature tiny waist?

I think I might have, not at the moment that I knew about, but I squeezed and stretched and dieted and it probably wore out my digestive tract. Four years in all. I am not as healthy as I was then. But no doctor has ever said that, although I abused my intestines. People my age have some digestive disorders anyway, so I don't know how much was due to squeezing. I never did have a rib removed, as some people say. I have a peculiar bone structure that is a wide and low rib cage and nothing underneath, and the hip bones are very wide. So the waist looked that much slimmer by comparison. Nothing there, nearly nonexistent.

Later, you would regularly go out at night with famous friends, including James Dean. After her fatal car accident, though, you were said to be a curse and dubbed "The Black Madonna." Were people quick to distance themselves from you?

Oh, you mean the article after James Dean's death? Well, the woman who wrote that article was writing for a scandal magazine, *Whisper Magazine*, and it was all lies. She was called to the fore by America's foremost criminal attorney for libel. A whole bunch of young Hollywood starlets got together and had a suit against the magazine and they said one woman did 90 percent of the writing and they were

The Vampira Show





90 percent less. The CIA escorted the writer to the Mexican border and [she] was told that as long as she lived she could not step foot in the US. There were scary stories that were relayed in that magazine. She wrote the article, and it of course was burning

BY CARRIE: after you were blacklisted, you took the horror role in *Plan 9 From Outer Space*. Do you think Ed Wood was really a huge vampire fan, or did he just want a recognizable face in his film?

I don't know why he wanted Vampira, but when I first found out, it was from an article in the newspaper. At the time, three major movie picture companies wanted to do

a movie with me. The story would have Vampira as the central figure. I was owed 40 percent by my little station and they said no to all of them, for what reason I don't know. There was a bidding war for my services as a leading lady in major motion pictures. Then I read in an article that this little jerk was going to make a movie and wanted Vampira. I said, "How dare he, how dare he!" I'd worked so hard to get up to where I am from the bottom of the ladder. And now he was going to pull me down into the slip with him! "That stupid little nebbish," is what I thought. I was incensed. That was my initial reaction. Oh, whatever.

Do you keep up on the genre currently? Do you watch horror movies?

I am not a moviegoer. I like black and white movies. I like color. Soft colors are nice, everything else feels like razor blades on my eyeballs. I hate the high-definition colour that they use now. I am not a moviegoer but I do watch television. There are classic movies that I'd love to see, but our motion picture theatre is out of business. I never say to someone, "Let's go see a movie." I would be dragged by my first husband to see movies. He was a screenwriter, and we'd go every Saturday night to see the new biggie. Cowboys were big in those days. How I hated it. I would go to the ladies room and sit in the lobby and watch people because to me that was interesting. Universal energy. People dressing a certain way and buying buttered popcorn. I wanted to know why people wanted to buy popcorn. I wanted to know the real, pure psychology of life, not canned imagination. I always found their imagination pale to my own, so it was boring to watch. But no, I have not been a moviegoer of my own volition. Especially today's horror movies, which are not horror, they're violence. I don't like to see violence or think about it. I like vintage horror. I like *Nosferatu*.

What do you think of *Vampira: The Movie*?

You know the cover photo for the [DVD] box — that was the end of *Plan 9 From Outer Space*, that was the final shot. Ed Wood said, "You have to walk toward the camera, in an alpha-stale, and when you get to the camera, SCREAM!" I was startled by the camera. And that's better horror than when a monster goes "Boo." That doesn't compare to this. When the monster is frightened, the monster is out of control. That is dangerous. That's scary to me. That picture was taken when I was actually scared. Coming out of my alpha-stale, startled. That's a good photograph.

Death and desire, the scary and the sensual — what is it about that mix, and how much of that image is you?

Lith stole Eve away from Adam. She was the first



"I DON'T LIKE TO SEE VIOLENCE OR THINK ABOUT IT. I LIKE THE VINTAGE HORROR. I LIKE NOSFERATU."

BARBARA B. STONE

woman with that instinct. To seduce away another one's love, just to see them crushed, to be superior to her — that's who Vampira is in another incarnation. I am just the opposite of that. I have never to my knowledge ever dated a married man or even one with a steady girlfriend. I am too moral for that. I am a prissy creature.

Forrest J. Ackerman created the Vampira character, which has always similarities to Vampira. Describe your relationship with him.

He hardly ever mentioned Vampira. I don't know what year he started *Pulpus Monsters*. He was a big Vampira fan and a personal friend of mine. When I was blacklisted very quickly and everyone avoided me, Forry did not. He was hanging around anyway. Until one day he dropped out of my life and pretended that he never heard of me. Vampira had the same opening as I did, she said, "Hello, my name is Vampira, but you may call me Vampy." I originally said that I was Vampy. They had the same wordage. And the article that he sold to Harris Publications was exactly the same thing we were doing on my show. He stole the whole thing for \$25. How valuable he deemed them to be? He claims to have created that character, which is disgusting and shameful. He is not a very creative man, but he is a very bright man for finding talent. He found really gifted people.

Is Vampira permanently married to Maita? Or is the character its own entity?

I was looking for a new Vampira in 1960. I couldn't play it. I think she has to be 34, the age that she is. I played her three years older than I was. But I felt that she had to be in early middle age, because that is more appealing to men than a woman who doesn't know anything yet. To have the woman who has the beauty of youth but with some of the wisdom that has been accrued. A woman is in her peak of beauty at 35. It doesn't have to be me at all. I didn't want to do it again myself. In the first place in 1960 I wanted someone else to do it and they couldn't find anyone. I certainly wasn't going to do it when I was 58 years old. I wouldn't do that again.

You continue to paint and draw — including images of Vampira. Have you always considered yourself an artist?

I haven't done anything now for several years. I've been drawing since I was a very little kid. Laying on my stomach in the living room the way people do. I'd ask my mother, "What should I do now?" And she'd say to shut up. But it was doing something with my creative energy. I was an artist, dealer. I was never a trained artist. I was gifted with imagination and courage and that's about it.

THE FILMMAKER BEHIND IT'S ALIVE, GOD TOLD ME TO
AND 9 — THE WINGED SERPENT RECALLS HIS BRUSH,
AT AGE 27, WITH A HOLLYWOOD LEGEND

LARRY COHEN

ON

ALFRED HITCHCOCK

INTERVIEW BY MICHAEL DOYLE

How were you greeted on audience with Alfred Hitchcock?

I'd met a guy named Mike Ludmer, who at the time was head of the story department at Universal. I told Mike an idea I'd concocted for a thriller called *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting* (about a woman who is stalked by her lover [later after he learns she aborted their baby] and he thought it would make an interesting movie for Hitchcock. I was thrilled begging wires to hear this Mike then arranged for me to meet with Hitchcock at the St. Regis Hotel in New York. Naturally, I was very nervous about meeting my hero, but Hitchcock was charming and friendly. We talked for three and a half hours, and the first three hours of our conversation was Hitchcock regaling me with all these amazing stories about the movies he'd made, the famous scenes he'd shot and the scenes he never shot. He also talked about the pageantry of wonderful stars he had worked with and his dealings in Hollywood. It was a fascinating conversation and one I'll never forget. After Hitchcock had finally finished, he simply said, "Why don't you tell me about your story?"

Can you tell us something about Hitchcock that may surprise some people to hear?

My interactions with him were only few, so I can't offer any great psychological insights into Hitchcock's character. But one thing I did discover about him was that he found it difficult to say his to people in person. Here was this successful director who had made some of the greatest Hollywood movies of the past few decades, but he was not quite what he appeared to be. The truth is, Hitchcock was always vulnerable to the influence and opinions of producers and studio executives. He also found it very tough to have one-on-one conversations. When I arrived back in Los Angeles from New York, I was telling everybody and their sister that I was now working with Alfred Hitchcock. Unfortunately,

Hitchcock had already been talked out of directing *Daddy's Gone A-Hunting*. Mike called me and said, "Don't be surprised that Hitch has changed his mind, because he just can't bring himself to say no to people in person." I was devastated by that news.

Daddy's Gone A-Hunting was eventually helmed by Valley of the Gulls director Mark Robson.

Yeah, but it was a big disappointment for me that Hitchcock didn't direct it. He would have made a much better movie than Robson. I remember Hitchcock telling me, "I'm going to cast Sandy Dennis and John Phillip Law — this'll be great!" I later learned that Hitchcock would often have these long, enthusiastic meetings with writers and would lavish praise on them. He'd tell them all about his grand plans for the script — only to suddenly drop the entire project days or even hours later after the writers had gone home feeling wonderful. Sadly, that's what happened to me too.



Daddy's Gone A-Hunting



Daddy's Gone A-Hunting

BEFORE HOLLYWOOD CALLED, THE DIRECTOR OF GREMLINS AND THE 'BURBS CUT TRAILERS AND DIRECTED PIRANHA FOR THE KING OF THE B'S

JOE DANTE

ON

ROGER CORMAN

by MICHAEL DOYLE

Is it true that during your college years you wore a button with the name "Roger Corman" emblazoned on it in response to other students who were wearing pins reading "Jesus Love Goddard"?
The button fad was popular, so I had a bunch of Corman buttons made up, just to spread the word.

What was the reaction of your fellow students to seeing that?
A surprising number of people already knew who he was.

How did you become involved with New World Pictures?

After Jonathan Kaplan and Jon Davison came out to L.A., having been recommended by their NYU teacher Martin Scorsese, I got a call from Jon. Roger had exhausted the talent pool from the California schools and had turned to the east coast, since New World had been going through

a series of trailer editors who had to be constantly schooled in the studio "style." The idea was to put the trailer department in place, which could provide continuity. Joe thought my *Movie Grry* experience (which involved cutting together clips and trailers from other films) might adapt well for trailer cutting.

Do you remember first meeting Corman?

It was when I took my rough cut of the *Caged Heat* trailer to run at the same screening room where Howard Hughes liked to hole up for weeks with Kinescope boxes on his feet watching *Ice Station Zebra* over and over. I was late and Roger's first words to me were, "If I were you, young man, I'd try to get to these things on time." I thought my career was over right there, but I guess he's seen worse rough cuts, and I went on to do *Last Days of Man on Earth* and *Candy Stripe Nurses*. Around that time I was joined by [Rock 'n' Roll High School director] Allen Arkush and we became the New World Trailer Department.

What ingredients constitute a good trailer, in your informed opinion?

Don't give away too much. Make it look like there's more to it than what's being shown. And make it a kind of hellish version of the feel of the picture. Of course, we adhered to none of these standards at New World, where the only editing action was at the end. So the ending went into the trailer.

*You cut the trailer for *Tidal Wave*, a Japanese film that Corman acquired for New World. What are your*

Tidal Wave



memories of that production?

That began as a blockbuster epic — The Subversion of Japan. Andrew Meyer was hired to cut it by over an hour and add scenes with Lorne Greene as the US ambassador to the United Nations (that scene) shot in one day and cut in. Dubbed voices were supplied by a few actors from Big Bad Movie and the New World office and editorial staff. It was pretty much the desecration of a serious movie. We asked Andrew to shoot a bit for the trailer where Greene says the catchline, “When that war hits, 80 million people will be wiped out!” Then they shook the camera and dropped debris into the shot, which we cut into the trailer I remember running the shot and when Meyer called out, Greene looked at the camera with a look of disgust I’ve never seen before or since.

Filmmakers in Corman’s stable office do uncredited work for him. Did that apply to you?

I did uncredited editing work on a number of pictures during my time at New World. I cut the reshoots of *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden*; I re-cut *Cheep into Dirty Duck*; and supervised *Rock ‘n’ Roll High School* when Allen was under the weather. Outside New World, I re-cut a picture for Roger called *Real Charlie and the Moonbeam Rider* and cut down the live-action portions of Bruno Bozzelli’s *Allegro non troppo* — which have since been put back in, much to the movie’s detriment.

How would you describe Roger, first as a businessman and then as a human being?

Obviously, he’s one of the ace businessmen in Hollywood and, as much as I like Roger personally, he’s not the easiest person to get inside the mind of. He’s always been nice to me.

What is the best piece of advice that Corman has imparted to you about the business?

“Sit down a lot.”

Do you have any great Roger stories that you can share with us?

Too many, but when you add mine to everybody else’s you can see why I’m still trying to get funding to make a movie about Roger shooting *The Trip*.

Just how important and influential do you think Corman has been on you and American cinema in general?

In 1976, or thereabouts, virtually every major Oscar winner had started out with Roger. His effect on the movie business is, I think, incalculable. How long would it have taken all of these talented people to get where they are without Roger? Sure, most of them would have still made it, but Roger tested them and gave them opportunities that might have been years in coming. I certainly wouldn’t have been working with Spielberg by my fourth picture (1983’s *Nightmare: The Movie*) if it hadn’t been for the chance I got from Roger.



Picasso



Picasso



THE DIRECTOR OF THE SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE LOOKS BACK ON THE FIRST FEMINIST SLASHER MOVIE

AMY HOLDEN JONES

BY APRIL SNELLINGS

WHILE CAROL J. CLOVEN'S 1982 *ROOM MEN, WOMEN, AND CHAINSAWS: GENDER IN THE MODERN HORROR FILM* gave birth to the notion of the feminist protagonist (the "Final Girl") in the era's slasher cycle, it has never been a level playing field. After all, you only got to be the Final Girl after the first girl, the penultimate girl, and all the girls in between have ended up on the business end of a power tool.

Of course, we all know the rules the Final Girl must live by: she can dress, talk and fight like a man with impunity, but to make love like one or embrace like one has long remained off limits. Yet, filmmakers have subverted the trope for decades. Long before *Scream* earned critical kudos and box-office millions by deconstructing the Final Girl and her battleground, the *Slumber Party Massacre* franchise laid the foundation.

The series might seem unsophisticated when viewed

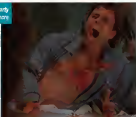
through the postmodern lens of movies such as *Hush*, *Tension* and *Behind the Mask*, but *SPM* and its two official sequels occupy an important niche in horror's cultural landscape. A full decade before Clover's book, *SPM* recognized the Final Girl trope and turned it on its bloody ear.

The film was released in 1982—a year that saw *Tobe Hooper's Poltergeist* join *E.T.* as one of the top box office earners, the *Friday the 13th* and *Halloween* series both released their third installments, and the previous year had given us such cult baws as *The Burning* and *My Bloody Valentine*. The slasher genre was thriving, and legendary exploitation producer Roger Corman was eager to cash in.

At the same time, a young editor was looking to make her directorial debut. Amy Holden Jones, then 26, found a strange little curiosity gathering dust in whatever passed for a vault at Corman's New World Pictures: a horror script by feminist author Rita Mae Brown, best known for her lesbian coming-of-age novel, *Rubyfruit Jungle* (think *Catcher in the Rye* with more oral sex). The script, titled *Don't Open the Door*, was intended as a feminist take on the slasher genre. Without bothering to ask permission, Jones enlisted a few student actors and her cinematographer husband, Michael Chapman, to shoot a prologue for the script.

"You have to start somewhere, and a 26-year-old woman directing anything at all at that time was unheard of," says Jones, who had worked as an assistant to director Martin Scorsese as *Taxi Driver*. "Women were virtually absent behind the camera unless they were stars or had family connections. The Corman factory was the way in for those of us with no family con-

The *Slumber Party Massacre*





**The Slumber Party
Massacre**



neckties ... I did not so much choose *SPM* as it chose me."

Jones cut the reel together on her pal Joe Dante's editing table, using music cues from Dante's *The Howling*. Chapman, a noted cinematographer, was fresh from shooting *Raging Bull*, so the prologue looked damn good — good enough to convince Cornan to commit \$250,000 to complete the film and hire Jones to direct it.

"I did it as a directing sample only; I was shocked when Roger decided he wanted me to finish the film," recalls Jones. "Roger asked me how much I spent on the prologue; I told him it cost me about a thousand dollars. He said, 'You have a future in the business,' then asked what it would take to finish the script. ... I had never even read the rest of the script. When I did, I realized it was a mess. That was also the beginning of my career as a screenwriter, as the first thing I did was rewrite."

Since Jones had never seen a slasher film, she had some serious catching up to do.

She recalls, "When I sat down and looked at *Mid-Jeween* and *Friday the 13th*, I realized how derivative [Brown's] original script was and I set out to both fulfill the requirements of the genre and make it somewhat unique. I was afraid of making something politically incorrect, but I also wanted to rebel. By this time, directors like Francis Ford Coppola, Jonathan Demme and Martin Scorsese had all made exploitation films for Cornan, so why not me? It's lovely to say you should

make it in the business with your moral petticoat untied, but this is the real world."

Jones doesn't remember much about Brown's original script — only that there was a slumber party and a killer with a big, um, drill. According to her, Brown's take on the genre was a fairly serious one, so she added liberal doses of humor.

"The rewrite was enormous," she recalls. "I wrote all the set pieces, changed or created all the deaths, and reworked most of the characters. But the drill metaphor is Brown's. Most good horror scripts are a metaphor for an underlying fear. This one is about a teenage girl's terror of getting laid for the first time."

In true Cornan fashion, *SPM* was shot in only twenty days. The crew had to be resourceful, since Cornan's business model didn't allow for extravagant luxuries, such as, well, sets and electricity. "Sometimes Roger would take away our generator, saying we could light scenes using car headlights," Jones says. "Those days our grips would tap into city power lines. You could see the streetlights dim for miles."

According to Jones, Cornan was extremely pleased with the film she delivered. "He said the preview was the best in New World history," she remembers. "I was there, and it was a gas. People yelled back at the screen and laughed a lot. They jumped in all the right places. That was all we were going for. We weren't trying to change the world."

Helped along by its iconic phallic poster (Jones also directed the poster's photo shoot), *SPM* was a hit,

which could only mean one thing: *Squid's*. The series would continue without Jones, though.

"By then I'd moved on and Roger knew it," she says. Comman asked Jones to direct another exploitation film, but she convinced him to back the Jamie Lee Curtis drama *Love Letters* instead. To date, *SPM* is Jones' only horror film (though she did work as a writer on the 1997 creature feature *The Arachnophobia*).

The drill killer went on without her. Five years after the first *SPM* film hit theatres, Comman enlisted first-time feature director Deborah Brock to helm *SPM II*; he revisited the franchise once more with 1999's *SPM III*, directed by Sally Matteson. But even though she's left the horror genre behind, Jones is proud of her directorial debut.

"Actually, for what it is, I think it's a good film," she allows. "[This] is how I measure success of the movies. Does the film do what it is trying to do? [*SPM*] does. Stylistically it is primitive, but it has moments. The first death in the locker room is something I'm extremely proud of. I also love the one that is intercut with Valerie watching a horror film on TV. *SPM* is simply entertaining and it doesn't take itself seriously. Also, Rita's core drink metaphor carries a lot of water."

Though the original franchise came to an end with its third installment, the series enjoyed something of a revival in 2008 with Jim Wynorski's *Gleebladder Massacre*, which was co-produced by Comman and originally titled *SPM IV*. The series' influence is undeniable; the *SPM* films inspired a plethora of imitators, including

Sorority House Massacre and *Sorority House Massacre II* (which even incorporated footage from *SPM*), *The Sucky Hook Lingerie Party Massacre*, *Psycho Sleepover*, *The Last Slumber Party*, *House on Sorority Row*, and *The Stay Awake*.

More than 30 years after the release of the original *SPM*, viewers remain sharply divided about the franchise's feminist trappings. To many, the films represent a rarity in the genre. Besides being the only horror franchise helmed exclusively by women, the first installment, in particular, flips many of the genre's typical gender roles: the women keep cool heads under pressure and generally do the rescuing while their male counterparts crumble.

The franchise's detractors, on the other hand, offer a more cynical explanation: the films are perceived as feminist horror movies only because Comman was shrewd enough to market them as such.

"At the time of its release [*SPM*] was attacked by feminists, but that is absurd," Jones says. "More boys do on cameras by far than girls, and far more brutally, so well. This is the nature of the genre. It's not about violence against women per se any more than *The Grudge* is about child abuse. Obviously I was well aware of the drill metaphor. Why else would the killer have his drill bit cut off in the final scene? I was a young feminist then and I'm a middle-aged one now. There were precious few strong women on screen at that point. I've made a whole career of trying to change that. This was the beginning, humble though it may be."

Slumber Party
Massacre II



A GENRE VETERAN REMEMBERS WORKING
WITH A SPECIAL FX LEGEND

LANCE HENRIKSEN

ON

STAN WINSTON

by JOHN W. DOWEN

EVEN IN THE AGE OF BREATHLESS FAN-BOY HYPERBOLE, IT'S DIFFICULT TO OVERSTATE THE INFLUENCE OF STAN WINSTON (1949-2008) ON THE WORLD OF SPECIAL EFFECTS. Winston's bibliography reads like a checklist of genre staples: he lent his talents to *The Thing*, *Predator*, *Monster Squad* and *Jurassic Park* to name only a few.

Lance Henriksen, who worked with Winston on *The Remo Remo*, *Aliens* and *Pumpkinhead* (which Winston also directed), remembers the FX legend as an innovator, a consummate professional and an artist of nearly unparalleled ability.

How would you describe Stan Winston?

Oh, man, he was probably the nicest and most vivid, excited guy you could ever work with. His enthusiasm was boundless and he was also really skilled. He couldn't wait to shoot a scene, he couldn't wait to solve all these problems.

***Pumpkinhead* was made shortly after you and Winston had worked together on *Aliens*. Had you developed much of a working relationship during that production?**

Oh, sure, sure. We spent many hours [together] with that last scene where stuff is going through my chest and I'm ripped in half, all that stuff. I was just going down there with everybody. I was just, "Whoa, what a ride!" Stan was a very busy guy, and you'd walk into his stacks and see a whole new world he was creating. My favorite story about Stan is that when he was on a plane, going to take the place of the guy who had done *Predator*, he drew the *Predator* on a napkin. And when he got there, that's what they built. I compare that to Lincoln on a railroad train heading for Gettysburg, writing the Gettysburg Address on [the back of an envelope].

He helped bring practical effects into the CG era with *Jurassic Park*, but you knew him best before that time.

One thing about Stan Winston: I did three movies with him and all were before CG. Everything was either real or models, you know, manikines. It was a great era, an exciting era, and we all needed each other. It was a real conspiracy, and that was the great part. Nowadays you do a scene and there are about twenty guys in a room with video monitors moving shit around, re-coloring it. It's a different kind of conspiracy, more like an army.

How do you think he should be remembered?

As an artist. As a sculptor [he was on par with] Auguste Rodin. He created so many images, and gelled them right out of the hat. For example, I just bought my daughter a bunch of baby chicks and baby turkeys. And I was looking at them, knowing I was soon going to be doing this interview, and I was thinking that birds are direct relatives of the dinosaurs. And I could imagine Stan standing there looking at a baby turkey, going "Wow, let's start here!"



THE CO-CREATOR OF THE [REC] FRANCHISE OUTLINES
HIS PLACE IN NEW SPANISH HORROR CINEMA

JAUME BALAGUERÓ

by DEJAN OGJANOVIC

JAUME BALAGUERÓ MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF WITH HIS 1999 DEBUT FEATURE *THE NAMELESS* (*Los sin nombre*), an adaptation of Ramsey Campbell's novel about a woman whose search for her missing daughter leads her to a satanic cult. The Spanish filmmaker's talent for creating an intense atmosphere of dread was evident in his next two films, but due to problems with distributors, neither *Darkness* (2002) nor *Fragile* (2005) brought him the success many genre fans felt he deserved. Balaguero finally scored an international hit with 2007's *[REC]*, a stunningly suspenseful found-footage movie that put a surprising religious twist on zombie tropes. He also directed the second and fourth installments of the *[REC]* franchise, and recently switched gears from supernatural horror to psycho-thriller with *Sleep Tight* (2011).

Rue Mirguetran into Balaguero at the Grossmann Film and Wine Festival in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where we talked about his career of fear.

Are you strictly devoted to horror or do you perhaps plan to try some other genre in the future?

I'm not strictly a horror director. If you look at my previous films, then yes, you could think that I'm strictly a horror director. In fact, I would like to change, to make different movies. My last movie, *Sleep Tight*, is not exactly a horror movie, it's more like a thriller. It's more about suspense, tension. It is not a movie to scare people, to make them afraid during the movie, but after the viewing. When they arrive at home and go to sleep, then they can be scared, not during the viewing.

When and how did you first encounter horror? Could you watch American and European horror films during conservative dictator Francisco Franco's period? What were your influences?

Franco died when I was seven years old. Of course I could watch horror films like anywhere else in Europe. A lot of people think that Spain has been too strongly affected by the Franco experience. From 1975 onwards Spain has been a free country just like France, Italy, etc., but my main influences are not from the culture of my country but from films, novels and comic books from around the world. I have many different influences. Art house movies were also very important in my youth. John Boorman, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Eric Rohmer... All the same time, American movies, Hollywood movies, classics of the 1980s like *Remakeur*, *Alien*, *RoboCop*. And of course some European horror films from the 1980s, especially Italian films: Dario Argento, Joe D'Amato, and especially Lucio Fulci. I like very much *The Other* by Robert Mulligan, *Rosemary's Baby*, all the classics. I also love *Hellraiser*, although when I saw it recently, it wasn't the same – but I still love it. The Australian film *Wolf Creek*, I love that one, too.

All of your movies have very bleak endings. Is that a reflection of your world view?

Yes, that's true, but I think it's unconscious. It comes from my view of the world, but I'm not a pessimistic person. I'm very happy with my film *Fragile*. Perhaps it doesn't have a happy ending, but there is more light at the end, with hope. I'm very happy with this.

Why didn't it get the attention and success that it deserved?

My experience with *Fragile* was a very strange one. It had its premiere in France, at the Gérardmer Film Festival, and the critics and audience responded in a very enthusiastic way. The film won many awards at the festival, but afterwards it tended to disappear. Yet it is one of my favourite movies... There were legal problems for the distribution in the United States because there was an American company involved which crashed by the time the film was finished. The film entered a legal limbo. It's a pity.

The Barcelona-based production company Filmox – and especially producer Julio Fernández and Filmox's Fantastic Factory genre label – created a small renaissance of horror. What was it like for you there?

All my films have been produced by Filmox and Julio Fernández. He is a very good friend of mine. But only one of my films, *Darkness*, was made within the Fantastic Factory (label). When Julio Fernández met (producer, director and Fantastic Factory co-founder) Brian Yuzna, they started to make a lot of horror movies – very different kinds of horror movies, some of them for theatrical release, some of them straight to DVD – and it was really interesting because there were a lot of movies and a lot of movement inside Filmox. Now they are still producing, but because of the overall economic situation, they are making fewer films. *Sleep Tight* was produced by Filmox, but not by Fantastic Factory, because it no longer exists.

What was the creative philosophy of Fantastic Factory? How different was it from other production companies?

There was the idea to make a company with a whole line devoted to horror movies. You do not have that in Spain. The other companies are not devoted to horror. They were producing a lot of low-budget horror, like *Gagge* and *Anarchy*, for the international market, and at the same time they were producing movies – with sex, for example – which were middle-budget movies. From the start, *Darkness* was conceived as a more ambitious film, with international actors.

***Sleep Tight* was the first time that you directed a script by someone else.**

The script is from a friend of mine, Alberto Matel, with



Fragile



Sleep Tight

when I wrote the script for "To Let" [an episode of the Spanish horror TV project *Almas to Keep You Awake*]. The idea of "To Let" was mine, and the two of us wrote the screenplay together. He was also executive producer of my [REC] movies. So when he offered me the script for *Sleep Tight*, he gave it to me as a friend, asking my opinion. When I read it, I said, "Listen, this is great, I love it. If I could direct it, I would love to."

What was it, exactly, that attracted you to it?

It was something organic, instinctive. I was reading and I was totally immersed. I was anxious to turn page after page just to see what happens next. I liked how the script uses a very classical scheme: a bad guy torments an innocent, happy girl. I've seen that the dozens of times, but the way the script twists and turns it around, it becomes something completely fresh. It explains the story from the point of view of the evil guy, and I liked the way the script forces the reader to be on the side of the evil guy and to have a moral conflict while sharing the point of view and all the plans and strategies of such a person. It was a challenge for me as a director to make that shift of point of view in the movie.

After *Fragile* and the [REC] movies, were you consciously looking for a project that would take you away from the fantastic?

It was a conscious decision. I wanted to make something different, something completely realistic. But I read the script without knowing anything about it, and I fell in love reading it, so it was the script that pushed me to change my style a bit.

For most of its running time, *Sleep Tight* plays like a suspense thriller, but then, towards the end, there is

are very explicit gore scenes. Was there any fear that this could hurt the film's commercial life?

The problem could exist if the film is trying to be very violent all the time, in every scene, but not so in this case. Like the point when that scene arrives because the film is otherwise not very violent, it is more about suspense, about expecting something to happen... When the violence arrives in the movie, it is very realistic. It is really shocking, like in real life. When you are suddenly confronted with real violence, you become shocked. It is very strong and unexpected. That is what I wanted for the scene.

What can you reveal about the final [REC] movie, *Apocalypse*?

The tone is gonna be horror, no comedy, like in [REC] 3: Genesis. It did not perform very well because the audiences were surprised by a different tone, which was more humorous. For them it did not feel like a [REC] movie. They felt betrayed. Part four will be just strong horror. There's gonna be some action, horror, a lot of surprises and an unexpected, new kind of originality. It will explain a lot of things about the [REC] mythology hinted at in previous films.

How demanding will it be in terms of makeup effects and gore?

It depends. There are different kinds of gore in movies. For example, [REC] 3: Genesis is actually the goriest in the series, but at the same time it's the funniest. It's not a creditable gore. So, [REC] 4: Apocalypse will probably be less of a gore-fest than the third one, but it will be stronger and more realistic in its violence and shocks. We are taking great care to be respectful towards the previous ones.

[REC] 4: Apocalypse



THE DIRECTOR OF HALLOWEEN III AND IT
REMEMBERS AN ATOM-AGE MONSTER MAKER

TOMMY LEE WALLACE

ON

RAY KELLOGG

BY MICHAEL DOYLE

OF ALL FURVEYERS OF 1950s ATOMIC SCHLOCK, THE MOST LUDICROUSLY INGENUOUS WAS UNDOUBTEDLY RAY KELLOGG (1905-1978). Beginning his career as a cameraman in the US Army, Kellogg later provided special photographic effects for a number of A-list Hollywood movies before teaming up with producer Ken Curtis to fulfill his directorial ambitions. Together they breathed life into the magnified memories of *The Giant Gila Monster* and *The Killer Shrews*. Shot back-to-back in Texas, in 1959, the former is a cherished classic of irradiated horror, the latter infamous for its flakey creatures being nothing more than dogs with fake fangs and shaggy carpets strapped to their backs. *Halloween* III director Tommy Lee Wallace pays tribute to Kellogg.

What is it that you love about *The Giant Gila Monster* and *The Killer Shrews*?

It's one of those things where you had to be there. I remember that *Gila* and *Shrews* are both towering pieces of schlock, but that does not diminish my love for them. They were originally released as a double feature. I saw them when I was nine years old and rock 'n' roll was brand new. Pop culture, as a concept, was only just beginning to awaken to itself. Here, as a teenage slacker, was not anywhere on the horizon. In that era, the closest description of what we were experiencing on screen might be "high camp." The impression they left on me was profound, and thinking about those movies always makes me smile. These were not masterworks with big budgets. They were cheap and the seams showed, but they allowed us to see how it was done. Inevitably, this led us to a huge notion: if guys like Ray Kellogg were getting away with dressing up dogs as giant shrews and putting ordinary reptiles into miniature sets — and subsequently getting their movies into theatres — then, hey, surely anybody can do this!

Kellogg's Giant Gila Monster is overtly a benign-looking lizard enlarged by a macro lens.

I think *Gila* has a strange, touching, almost documentary cast. The teenagers feel real and were not mainstream professionals — some weren't even actors. The whole thing had a peculiar veracity about it, balanced against the transparent phronesis of the monster itself. It was imbued with this odd realism that suggested "this could really be happening" — a heady, weirdo combination.

What are your thoughts on *The Killer Shrews*?

A fitting companion piece to *Gila*, but here the formula starts to show. There are lots of people talking in medium shots, and when things get too dull Kellogg cuts away to the creatures. Enough said.

What is the general view of Kellogg's work today?

People must surely respect the fact that he did a competent job on a very limited budget. No one in his right mind will proclaim him a cinematic genius. His work is merely adequate with a pretty standard episodic television style that was typical for the time: medium masters as prose-narr, close-ups when he could afford the time — simple and utilitarian. The magic here is in the more general phenomenon of cheap monster features responding to, and impacting on, a post-atomic culture.



The Killer Shrews

THE LATE FRENCH RENEGADE RECALLS A CAREER STEEPED IN VAMPS AND POLITICS

JEAN ROLLIN

by ERIC S. EICHELBERGER

I WAS BORN ON HALLOWEEN SO IT ONLY SEEMED NATURAL TO BE OBSESSED WITH GHOULS, GHOSTS, Goblins, DEMONS AND THE ABSURDLY MACABRE.

Growing up in a small town in core country, Indiana, I indulged in the escape of horror films, and eventually found myself drawn to more artistic foreign horror from the likes of Italians Gero Argerho, Mario Bava, Lucio Fulci and Michele Soavi. Then, one day, a friend introduced me to Jean Rollin's 1979 lesbian vampire movie *Fascination* and I was hooked on the French filmmaker.

Rollin, who died December 16, 2010, at age 73, was inspired by the serials he watched as a boy, and themes of childhood innocence are persistent in his work: His films involve adventures, fantasy, castles and gothic horror. And of course the naked lesbian vampire girls—

always sexy but at the same time almost motherly and sisterly, and very dangerous. His work lies somewhere in the neither region between art house, fantasy, exploitation and fairy tale, which made him both an auteur and the stuff of French cinema. He inspired teenage fantasies with movies that were always erotic but not too gratuitous, and always mysterious.

Eventually, I collected most of Rollin's films, but never dreamed that I would meet him. That changed in 2006, when I was backpacking through Europe. In Paris I discovered that a friend of a friend knew Rollin. He agreed to set up a meeting where he would act as translator so I could interview the filmmaker in his Parisian apartment.

Rollin was born on November 3, 1938, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, near Paris, to Claude Rollin, an actor and theatre director, and Denise Rollin-Le-Gastil. He saw his first film, Abel Gance's *Capitaine Corcoran* (1943), when he was five-years-old, and was so entranced by the storm sequence that he declared to his mother that he would someday be a filmmaker. Aside from being exposed to live theatre through his father's profession, other early influences included American serials and comic books. The younger Rollin would get his start in the business at age sixteen, at Le Films De Sabane, a company that did opening and closing credits and short cartoons, as well as some live-action films and documentaries. After serving in the army and working as an editor there on military commercials, he found a job as an assistant editor at a lab.

"I learned—as we say—on the job," said Rollin when I asked if he ever went to film school. "I started out at

The Living Dead Girl



a school with a film lab internship, and then I became an assistant editor. At that point, big film labs there were businesses all around, and there was a dubbing company and a translation company that were in the lab area, and the dubbing company was in the habit of recruiting assistants from amongst the lab interns. So I went to work there and started in musical film dubbing. I learned a lot. There was an actress that was pretty famous at the time in musicals named Caterina Valente. And at the time in the States there were a lot of musicals. We needed the sounds of feet tap dancing. I said, "How are we going to do it?" And the actress said, "We, no, no, you'll see. We aren't going to pass up this opportunity," and she took off her shoes and did [he makes a tap dancing noise] right then, first take and it was good."

Rollin made his first film in 1958, a short called *The Yellow Lovers* (*L'air amoureux jaune*), using a beach in Cegges that he would reveal for subsequent films. He embarked on several short projects of varying success during the '60s, including the surreal *Sky of Copper* (*Ciel de Cuivre*), which he started shooting in 1961 but stopped when he ran out of money, and a 30-minute documentary called *Life in Spain* (*Vie en Espagne*), about life under the rule of dictator Francisco Franco. Rollin had to flee Spanish police because of it and barely made it back into France.

In 1968, the filmmaker finished his first feature, *The Rape of the Vampire* (*Le viol du vampire*), which was originally conceived as a half-hour project.

"I quickly wrote a little story and found a deserted château and we began to shoot," he recalled. "I had no experience and... well, I had a team of friends that was found by coincidence. It was everyone's first film, and it was really amateur. We shot day and night, literally. There are some incredible stories from that shoot. At the end of the second consecutive night of filming with no sleep, the cameraman fell asleep at the camera. I noticed when I said 'cut' and he didn't cut."

After he edited down the footage, Rollin had a 40-minute film and realized that if he could get another 200,000 francs, he could make a second part and have a feature. So he wrote a sequel, called *Queen of the Vampires*, to attach to *The Rape of the Vampire*, which would ensure it a proper theatrical release.

"It's very difficult to film a sequel to a film like this; we had to come up with a new twist on the story, so we invented a queen, the Queen of the Vampires, who came out of the sea," he recalls. "Incredible! And then, about two months later, we had a feature film!"

As luck would have it, the launch of Rollin's career coincided with the riots of May 1968 in Paris. During that period, millions of students and two-thirds of the country's workforce protested, went on strike and caused widespread civil unrest that almost toppled the government. The result was a more liberal society, and that included relaxed attitudes towards sexuality. During that period, French distributors, fearing for the box office, decided to freeze their activities until things went back to normal. As a result, *The Rape of the Vampire*

The Demonic



was the only new film released, and with no competition, it became the most successful film of the year in France.

Rollin's next film, and first colour feature, was 1970's *The Nude Vampire* (*Le vampire nu*), inspired by a 1916 film named *Judea*. He wanted to do a classic mystery film but ended up with more of a surrealist poem. It features a set of twins, Marie Pierre and Catherine Castel, hairdressers with a desire to act and who were willing to be nude on camera. It cemented his reputation for making films filled with naked nymphs.

"At the beginning, for *Le viol du vampire*, it was a commercial choice," he explains of how his style developed. "The producer didn't really understand my story, he wasn't the only one, but if I want to be able to sell it, I had to write it for commercial success. So he

reminded me of that. And the naked girls were easy to direct. 'Well, look, you get naked and you do it this way...' [he demonstrates directing with a series of hand gestures]. In the end, I found it really funny, because when there was a dialogue between two people, the nudity was at the forefront; it's fairly strange. I found it pretty artistic, cool and a lot of fun. And after we had started this sort of thing, I put a lot of naked girls in my films, but I didn't put love scenes in. A naked woman is really beautiful, more so than a naked man, of course. Nudity of a feminine character is a very important artistic element, especially if you put it somewhere aside from the bedroom. If you put it in a cemetery or on a beach, all of a sudden it takes on a dimension. For example, if you put a naked woman in the middle of getting undressed in a bedroom, right away, there's a public reaction, and then you put the same naked woman in a cemetery, and there's a bit of mystery."

The '70s represented Rollin's busiest period. Among his projects were *Shiver of the Vampires* (*Le frisson des vampires*, 1970), inspired heavily by the hippie movement; *Requiem of a Vampire* (*Requiem pour un vampire*, 1971), a k a *Caged Vixen*, about a vampire who lures beautiful women to his castle, and which was featured heavily in grindhouses in America; *Rose of Ice* (*La rose de fer*, 1972), his first feature not to centre around vampires, and most personal effort, yet also his least commercially successful; *The Demoniacs* (*Les démonsiaques*, 1974), a k a *Corse of the Living Dead*, a French/Belgian co-production about pirates and a mysterious island; and *Lips of Blood* (*Lèvres de sang*, 1975), about a man on a quest to find a castle, who discovers his family has been keeping the secret of vampirism from him.

The Lips of the Vampire



Lips of Blood



Rollin's favorite of this bunch was *Regain*. "I had a wonderful time making it," he explained. "For instance, while we are filming one day, I roll camera and the door opens unexpectedly, and then all of a sudden, what's going on? A vampire comes in and then... [the actor] was making it all up, but we had great things happen without a plan. Like that, completely improvised shots without any planning, and that made the day."

During this period, Rollin also made one of his most popular and successful pictures, the 1978 zombie movie *The Grapes of Death* (*Les raisins de la mort*), one of very few French gore films at the time. It was followed by *Fascination* (1978), another commercial success and another of his most-loved movies.

The early to mid-part of the '80s kept Rollin busy, as well. His most notable releases during this era include *Zombie Lake* (*Le lac des morts vivants*), which was supposed to be directed by Jess Franco, who wrote it but didn't show up for the shoot.

"I was about to go on vacation, my suitcase was packed and I was getting ready to go, and the phone rings and I was offered an amazing zombie film," said Rollin of the day he crossed paths with Franco, the director he's most often compared to.

Other highlights of that decade include 1982's *The Living Dead Girl* (*La morte vivante*), an ultra-gory vampire tale, and 1984's *Schools of Bangkok* (*Les professeurs de Bangkok*), an action thriller that pays homage to the serials Rollin grew up on.

Throughout most of his career, Rollin also directed hardcore pornography (as did Franco). Working under the pseudonyms Michel Gento and Robert Xavier, he made more than twenty adult films. With a very casual, very French attitude towards sex and nudity in cinema, making between erotic art films and hardcore porno never seemed strange to him.

"In porno, both the actors and the directors are in the same position," he told me. "One reveals his passions and the other acts them out, so there is nothing to be ashamed of."

In the '90s, because of problems getting financing, Rollin became very disillusioned with filmmaking and returned to writing novels, which he had done on and off for years. He made some attempts at making pornography again, but found that the industry had changed for the worse. But the late-'90s saw a resurgence in genre films, with a growing cult interest in exploitation and horror movies. With it, a new audience for Rollin's films emerged.

In 1997 he directed *Two Dying Vampires*, a return to his early roots but without the nudity, and in 2002 he made *Dracula's France* (*La France de Dracula*). In 2007, Rollin shot *The Night of the Clocks* (*La nuit des horloges*), which hasn't had a North American release.

WHY I LOVE JEAN ROLLIN in ONE'S OWN WORDS

These are my five picks that prove Jean Rollin was one of the most original directors in the history of film—he made movies that are lovely atmospheric, well executed, horrific, sensual and often very surreal.

1. FASCINATION (1978)

This story of a thief who hides out in the castle home of two seductive, bisexual, blood-drinking aristocrats remains, like best film, like his most polished, best photographed and most entertaining work, with an amazing score.



2. THE SHIVER OF THE VAMPIRES (1979)

Fairy-tale surrealism, lesbian vampires and abandoned chateaus and castles abound in this story of newlyweds arriving at a castle to visit the wife's cousin, only to find that they've become vampires with a plan for her. Rollin's best early vamp film, it best displays the taste and style that defines his work.

3. RAPE ON THE VAMPIRE (1980)

Rollin's earliest feature is actually two black and white shorts, one about psychologists trying to convince three sisters that they aren't actually vampires (they are), and the other about a vampire queen whose minions are rebelling. Raw and primitive, it may be his least accessible work, which is also its strength. I love that its radical politics made it the most successful film in France in 1980.

4. THE LIVING DEAD GIRL (1982)

Before it was a Rob Zombie song, it was Rollin's tale of a woman resurrected by toxic waste as a vampire, whose best friend's attempts to protect her end in blood. More straightforwardly gory than most of his work, it works as a gory horror, sleazy exploitation and a love story!

5. ZOMBIE LAKE (1981)

Underwater Nazi zombies, a really hot sunbathing girl, and not much more, this film is wonderfully simple. Sort of like Jess Franco's *Femle Vampire*, it's ridiculous, sexy and just plain fun to watch before bed.

He recalled the shoot: "I thought the scenery was magnificent, and bit by bit as time passed it got even better. There was the med school in Paris, there was an architectural museum, all filled with things made of wax, and it was pretty horrible, it would give you nightmares! There was an aquarium for children that we filmed at, and we renovated the hallways in stone fixtures, and it was a very fantastic atmosphere. I filmed

a horrific scene there – in such a place! We also found an anatomical wax museum from the 15th century and filmed in it."

After our interview, Rollin made his final film, *The Mask of the Medusa* (*Le masque de la Méduse*), a modern-day adaptation of the Greek mythological tale of the Gorgon. It has not seen a North American release either.

Obviously the industry changed a great deal over Rollin's 50 years in it, so I was curious to know what advice he could offer young filmmakers looking to follow in his footsteps. His answer illustrated just why genre fans like me love his movies – they're the work of a man who always made the most out of what he had in order to deliver his truly unique vision of what a genre movie could be.

"Do what you want to do, and don't worry about other people. All the young people want to do a shooting script, for example, because it seems professional, not only a shooting script, but also a storyboard. This doesn't work because human beings change all the time. It's not the same as ten seconds ago, and in ten seconds it won't be the same. So when you write the screenplay you're in your room, and when you're filming, when you're on set, everything changes, so it's useless – the shooting script, the storyboard, all these things aren't worth a thing. The second you are on set, everything changes. So be flexible. Go with it!"

Zombie Lake



Two Orphan Virgins



THE MAN BEHIND THE HILLS HAVE EYES, A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET AND SCREAM MUSES ON THE GENERATIONAL CHANGES IN THE HORROR MOVIE BUSINESS

WES CRAVEN

interview by MICHAEL DOYLE

How have you seen the genre change during your career?

When I first started, I'd had a meeting with studio heads they would give me this look that said, "What kind of horrible thoughts are in that guy's head?" He must be crazy, but maybe we can make some money with him." Then, about midway through my career, I started having meetings with people who were working for the studio heads who were big fans. Now, it's the actual heads of studio who are the fans! I get much less of a feeling from people that I'm a sick individual! [Laughs.] I think horror has penetrated the culture in a way that has given it more credibility. It certainly needs to take itself more seriously to the point where filmmakers just don't do something that is irresponsible, or make something that is slapped together to be the most disgusting thing you can think of.

What are your thoughts on the "golden generation" of horror directors that produced the likes of Carpenter, Romero, Hooper, Greenberg and yourself?

It seems empty in a way to say that ours is the golden generation because I never think of it that way. There were certainly some fantastic horror films made long before we were all alive, and probably will be again after we are gone. I think the generation of George, Tobo, John, myself and half a dozen others was perhaps a generation that spanned between cinema, books and education. I'm trying not to sound pompous here, but in a sense we were a little bit more steeped in the humanities and human reality, and were broadly informed, as opposed to a generation that grew up on video games and television, which doesn't run quite as deep.

There's a consensus amongst some critics that the current generation of horror filmmakers are not as intelligent or innovative as your generation, and produce mostly derivative and homogenized films.

I would agree to a certain extent, but every once in a while

there is a film that cuts the right line. In that is very smart and looks at the genre in a whole new way. There is a big temptation for looking down at the current generation and I try not to do that. I think in any time period, especially when it's happening, you are immersed in the majority of artifacts—whether they are films, books, paintings, whatever—that are mediocre or bad. There are just a very short few that are excellent, original and will last. But when you are away from that time, it then seems like the whole generation was like that, and it probably wasn't. There were certainly a lot of mediocre horror films made during the 1970s, and I suspect that when we get to 2025 and look back on this period now, there will be half a dozen to ten filmmakers that made very important films. We must wait and see.



A Nightmare on Elm Street



The Hills Have Eyes

THE LAST OF THE ORIGINAL UNIVERSAL MONSTERS REMEMBERS HIS WATERLOGGED DAYS AS THE CREATURE

RICOU BROWNING

BY MOANER T. LAWRENCE

What did you do before playing the Gillman?

I was an underwater diver. The first movie I worked on was 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. There was a company called Grantland Rice which did a bunch of sports films, the majority [of which] were about swimming. After those I did the Galeases.

Three different actors played the Gillman on land, but you donned the monster suit for the underwater scenes in all three Creature movies. How did you get the role?

I was attending Florida State and a friend of mine who was a general manager at a hotel called Wakulla Springs was going out of town and said, "There's some people coming from California to look at the springs for a location for a movie. Could you pick 'em up and take 'em to the springs?" I agreed, and while we were at Wakulla Springs the cameraman, Scotty McBurnie, asked, "Would you mind swimming in front of the camera so I can get some perspective of the size of a human being to the fish and the grass?" So I did. A couple weeks later I got a call from the manager of the hotel and he said, "They're trying to reach you, they liked your swimming and they wanna talk to you." So he gave 'em my number and the director, Jack Arnold, called me and asked, "How would you like to be an underwater monster? We like the way you swim."

What was the Creature suit made of, and how heavy was it?

Sponge rubber latex. It was quite buoyant, so I had to wear lead weights, chest plate, thigh pads and ankle [weights].

What was swimming in it like?

It was kind of awkward. It felt like swimming in an overcoat, but once you got used to it, it wasn't too bad. Think of it like football: you have the helmet, guard and pads on, and when you get in the game you don't even think about the fact that

you have it on. Wearing the Creature suit was the same way. Once I'd got into the scenes, I didn't even think about it. One of the hardest things was vision. The eye of the suit sat about an inch away from my eye. It was kind of like looking through a large keyhole, and I didn't wear a facemask because once it filled with water you couldn't get the water out. When you're looking with your naked eye at water it's very blurry, so looking through a keyhole with blurry vision was not very comfortable.

What's the funniest thing that happened to you on set while filming a Creature movie?

We shot in the winter, and while the water temperature was around 70 degrees, the air temperature was about 50 so it was pretty chilly. I was shivering sometimes and people in the crew would feel sorry for me and give me little shots of brandy. After four or five people felt sorry for me, the result would be a drunk Creature. So after a while people stopped giving me brandy.



THE STAR OF 1954's *CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON* REMEMBERS PLAYING OPPOSITE A UNIVERSAL MONSTER

JULIE ADAMS

by APRIL SMELLINGS

What were your first thoughts when Universal offered you the role of Kay Lawrence in *Creature from the Black Lagoon*?

My first thought was, the creature from what? What is this? I actually thought about turning it down, but then I thought, "Gosh, if I turn it down, they'll put me on suspension and I won't get paid." I read the script and it wasn't bad, so I thought, well, what the hey? It might be fun. So I didn't make any fuss and I did the movie.

Are you glad you did?

Yes, I am. It was fun. We had a good director and good actors, so I had a perfectly fine time making the movie... It was a very happy shoot, and I'm delighted that I can say that. It's very nice that so many people enjoy the movie so much, too. It gives me pleasure, and I know it gives all the other players pleasure, too.

Had you been a fan of the Universal Monster movies of the '30s and '40s?

I liked them, but I didn't think I wanted to be in them. I liked being in dramas or comedies or things of that sort.

Do you remember the first time you saw Ben Chapman (who played the character on land) in his full *Creature* get-up?

I remember it very well, because I was really kind of awestruck that it looked so real and yet so strange. There's a publicity shot that they took when he walked out, and my mouth is hanging open. I was clearly quite impressed by it, as we all have been over the years... I thought, "Wow, this is re-

ally quite something." Of course, that's [makeup artist] Bud Westmore and Jack Knowl. They designed the suit and built it right there in the makeup department, and they did quite a marvelous job.

What's your fondest memory of shooting the film?

The camaraderie on the set. We were all actors and we all took our work very seriously, but there were times when we just started to goof... We all got along very well, and our director was good. It was not hard work. We all became friends. No one was trying to upstage anybody else, we were all in it together.

One of the great things about the movie is that the viewer is encouraged to empathize with the Creature. Did you talk about that at all when you were making the movie?

It was clear that was happening, both in the script and during our rehearsals. I don't think we ever really talked about it directly, but it is definitely part of the film. The credit for the enduring popularity of the movie goes to the script, to our director, to the actors and to the men who played the Creature. A lovely kind of empathy is there, that the audience feels for the Creature, and that isn't always true in scary movies.

Every now and then, they bring up the prospect of a *Creature* remake. What are your thoughts on the subject?
My thoughts are that they should leave it alone. It worked well, and it still works today. Young people are still watching it. Why tamper with it? Why not find something new?



The Order in the Woods



BUFFY'S CREATOR SHARES HIS TAKE ON MONSTERS, MOVIES AND MODERN-DAY MYTH-MAKING

JOSS WHEDON

by MONICA S. KUEBLER



WHEN WRITER/DIRECTOR JOSS WHEDON'S SUPERHERO BLOCKBUSTER *THE AVENGERS* OPENED TO SOME OF THE HIGHEST BOX OFFICE RETURNS OF ALL TIME

in the summer of 2012, the filmmaker paused to pen an incredibly earnest online thank-you letter to his devoted cadre of fans, who had long elevated him to cult hero status. It was just further proof of what they already knew: the man is a class act—a guy who has returned to the dark and fantastical time and time again because, like us, he is a genuine fan of things that go bump in the night.

One must only watch his critically acclaimed TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel* or even the woefully short-lived sci-fi western *Firefly* to discover that. While those properties easily could have been juvenile, goofy and ultimately disposable, Whedon elevated them far above their premises (Valley girl vampire slayer, anyone?) to tell smart and often surprisingly heavy-lifting, self-aware genre stories, brimming with monsters (vampires, werewolves, witches and mutants among them), tragedy, and tough choices about morality and personal responsibility. And he did it all without ever losing that trademark androcentric of dark humor and fun.

Despite airing on network TV, nothing was taboo; the shows frequently tackled multi-faceted nuances of evil (and redemption), death and grieving, and even same-sex relationships, long before it was trendy. Further proof of Whedon's impact on the genre, and pop culture in general, can be seen in the large amount of academic texts that have been released about his oeuvre, covering a startlingly diverse range of topics, including *Power and Control in the Television Worlds of Joss Whedon* (McFarland, 2012) and *Joss Whedon and Religion* (McFarland, 2013).

In 2012, he put his horror-literacy front and center with *The Cabin in the Woods*, a feature he co-wrote with frequent collaborator Drew Goddard, who directed. A tried-and-true fright flick, *Cabin* is also an intelligent, highly entertaining deconstruction of the genre and its tropes, as well as a dead clever look at those who create scary stories and those who consume them. While the film—about a group of friends who travel to the titular cabin for a get-away weekend only to become embroiled (and hunted) by a conspiracy of monsters in a corporate plot to prevent the end of the world via annual human sacrifices—failed to make much of a dent at the box office, largely because it flew over the heads of less genre-savvy mainstream filmgoers, it was well received by horror fans and critics. In short, like much of Whedon's output, it proved itself yet another cult classic in the making.

We cornered the auteur to discuss the film, his legacy of genre television, and a career built upon a solid foundation of horror and bloodsuckers.

You co-wrote, produced and directed second unit on *The Cabin in the Woods*; can you tell me about how the concept for the film first came about?

You know, I have a little trouble with that. Drew actually asked me about that the other day, and I was like, "I don't remember!" It just sort of fell together very naturally, as, you know, someone who's been manipulating people to get into horrible situations for a long time, it made sense that that would ultimately be why, because somebody was making it happen. I think since [the film's wisecracking puppetmaster characters] Hadley and Stinson are clearly me and Drew, it wasn't so much of an idea as almost a diary.

Was there something specific that you wanted to explore here in regards to the horror genre?

Yeah, in particular I wanted to explore the conflict that horror creates. I've never had anybody, myself and Stephen King included, who makes horror, do a very good job of describing what it's for, why we need it, why we love it. I think there's a great tension between the identification and the objectification of horror, the thrill of rooting for somebody and the thrill of watching them attacked by a horrible monster. That tension is kind of a mystery and something I want to explore. It's also something that both Drew and I feel had almost been sullied a bit by the last wave of torture porn that was particularly prevalent when we were writing [*The Cabin in the Woods*] and we felt, well, there are

these standards, these tropes, this ritual that we all go to. The young people get in trouble and we love to see it. But the young people are getting stupider, and all of a sudden this isn't about a bunch of people that you might root for, the way you would in *Halloween* or *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, this is about how will they die and how much fun can one have while they do. So it was basically a comment on our love of horror but also our disappointment with how it's been progressing or evolving — or devolving!

Why didn't you direct the film yourself?

I had a lot going on at the time. I was really in love with this but I also wasn't sure I wanted to shoot a straight-up horror movie, and Drew was absolutely sure he did, and he has a love of just real gore. Anybody who's watched *Ruffy*, the least frightening horror show ever made, knows that I don't really share [his love of that]. Though I was raised on *Romans* and I love his terrifying classic, I don't want to be waist-deep in blood and viscera to get a shot. It made sense that it should ultimately be Drew's film.

How closely did you and Drew work together?

You can't work much closer than Drew and I did. We did the basic plot, and once we had our cast of characters and a few pages as sort of a template, we locked ourselves in the hotel for three days and just bludgeoned the entire thing, so every detail was figured out by the two of us on the whiteboard for each act, each day and then we would split it up. Once we wrote something there was very little tweaking of each other, our voices were so in tune, we both were so absolutely writing the same movie, so that even though we had favourite scenes and we did obviously work on it afterwards to shore it all up, there wasn't a lot of going in and reshaping each other because this was two voices as one. Of course, in shooting, I was there the whole time. Again, it's Drew's movie and I was there in an advisory ca-

The Cabin in the Woods



The Cabin in the Woods



pecity, but I give really good advice. And I shoot really good inserts.

Describe your approach to the design of the various monsters in the film.

We wanted this to feel very real. There were definitely some monsters that didn't make the cut because basically we had an effects house and we were pulling everything they had out of storage because we knew we were going to get to a point where we were going to want to see a lot more, even if it was just for a minute. We worked very hard to try to get the look of the [backwoods, zombie-like] Buckners right and to make it feel as real as possible, but there was only as much we could do given the budget.

How did you choose the monsters that were included? Were they your favorites or was it more to facilitate the telling of the story?

There are some iconic concepts and some of them are as old as the country, and that is why one of the things listed as the potential monster is the Hutter, because dealing with the idea of the structure of American horror mythos, the first two things we were afraid of were witches and Native Americans. There was a legitimate fear if you were living in the woods that a Native American might not want you there and might come slaughter your family. So that became a big part of our narrative, the stories that were written and told — that has a direct line of descendants straight onto the horror movies that I love. Obviously, there's [the Pinhead-like] Boneass Ed, who's very much a Clive Barker kind of a dude, and that's because that's an iconic thing for us. We didn't want to say, "Oh look, we're trying to be like him," but at the same time we did want to say, "Here's something that would have scared you as a child, and here's something that would have scared your father as a child, and here's something classical that we love," and then of course there's Drew, so there's also an angry, misleading tree, because he's Drew. There's an element of absurdity that he has to have. We were doing shout-outs to invoke the things that we thought our audience would have feared in their youth.

I absolutely loved the merman...

The concept was so much fun. [The FX] crew really brought it. They got it. And the blood out the blowhole! There are few things in there that [encourage you] to say, "Oh, that'll be on my tombstone."

The film presents all sorts of different nightmares. Which would you say are closest to your own?

I always have had a sort of deadly fear that if I'm walking through the woods at night alone I will turn and there will be a hideous old witch flailing at me very rapidly. I had one [nightmare] early on and that image is very much stuck in my head. Also [jumped] Mina from the John Bad-

WHY I LOVE JOSS WHEEDON by MONICA S. BUEHLER

There's much to adore about writer/director Joss Whedon and his body of work — beyond his reverent respect for his fans and the near-perfect balance of humor, pathos and monsters in his genre projects. These are the three things that hooked me on the storyteller.

GIRL POWER

Women don't get second billing in a Whedon story, and they never feel as if they've simply been shoehorned in to attract female viewers. They get to fight and kick ass (like Buffy herself), be computer and mechanical geniuses (Buffy's Willow and Firefly's Kaylee, respectively), and, most importantly, drive on-again storylines as both heroes and villains.

MONSTER CREATIVITY

Whether he's toying around with the standard vampires, werewolf and witch tropes, as in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* or creating original monsters (much of what lurks in the subterranean menagerie in *The Cabin in the Woods*) or examining the ways we could become monsters ourselves (*Firefly's* Reavers), Whedon's big bads and misunderstood baddies are always well-rounded and intensely purposeful — and, when necessary, they can also be genuinely freakin' creepy — like the toothy ballerina in *Cabin*.



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STORY

In an era when special effects are often seen as a substitute for clever storytelling and good dialogue, and reality TV continues to hook millions as its rapid programming, creators like Whedon are a posessed. Regardless of the medium and budget, he demonstrates that story is what it all hinges on — to the point of loathing to leave a tale unfinished for the fans. As a result, he made the feature *Serenity* to wrap the TV series *Firefly*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* continues as a Dark Horse comic book series.

him/Frank Langella. Dracula, I thought she was going to visit me anytime. It was horrible! And then, you know, anything that has to do with something big and slimy or hairy. A blob or a spider, those are bad ones for me.

The concept of the *Final Girl* is central to *The Cabin in the Woods*. In your opinion are slasher films misogynistic or feminist in nature?

I think a misogynist bent has sort of overwhelmed them. I've been public about how I felt about the deceitful romantic comedy *Captivity* and its ad campaign. Because when I think of horror movies, I think of the great horror movies of the '70s and the early '80s that really defined what I consider to be modern horror, although I really love all the older ones as well, everything from *Nocturnal* on. But I think of horror as being on the edge—sort of the way I thought about rap when it was first emerging. It was a place with more overt misogyny than any acceptable art form, yet it was also a place where women could suddenly be stronger and have a more powerful voice than in any mainstream art form. So it is definitely both, because the horror movie is, again, like rap, *unfraid*.

Like a lot of your work, there's a definite element of humor that runs through *The Cabin in the Woods*. Why do horror and humor go so well together?

Horror and humor go well together for a couple of reasons. One, boy, you need to laugh and, boy, when you're tense things are funnier. If you present something as a comedy, people are like, "Come on, make me laugh," whereas if you make someone laugh during a horror movie, they're like, "Oh god, thank you, thank you, oh god." So it's a good platform for that. But there are two other things I would say. One, there's an element of absurdity particularly in anything that has to do with fantasy and horror and, without turning into *Scream*, you kind of want to

pick up on the absurdity and go, "Is this really happening?" But most importantly, and this is something I figured out during *Buffy*: Horror and action are completely antithetical. Horror and comedy share a lot in common because they are about the unexpected. Comedy is very much about not seeing what's coming, it's about not being in control of your environment, it's about not knowing what you're about to walk into and horror is the same thing. Action is about understanding the environment and learning to master it, so when I would have to shoot something scary and then have *Buffy* fight, I found myself working it completely cross purposes visually and emotionally and it was quite difficult, but humor and horror require the same kind of understanding of what's outside the frame and what's outside the perspective of the person and the internal perspective of the person you are dealing with.

Study military organizations have popped up repeatedly in your projects; what's your fascination with these groups?

You know, it was actually a fan who first pointed that out to me and I hadn't even noticed it, that I had governments experiencing on people all the time. I will say that I do feel that everybody is being manipulated all the time. It is part of what [the TV show] *Dollhouse* was about, it's something that I'm obsessed with because it's a part of your daily life: what you want for breakfast, what you want for a career, what you want is something you're being told to want, and what you're not seeing, you're being shown something shiny during. The state of the country right now, if that doesn't prove beyond a doubt that people have been operating without our best interests in mind, and on us, then I don't know what it's going to take. So it's happening and it offends me and there isn't much I can do about it, so when I make a monster movie the biggest monster usually wears a tie.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer





Firefly



The Cabin in the Woods

Is it natural for you to put so much sci-fi into your horror projects or does it simply allow you to bring something fresh to the table?

I am ultimately a fantasist. It would be surprising to me if I had an idea for horror that didn't have some element of fantasy in it. And I do think about stories that are just "This person is unhinged, beware," but by and large some kind of fantastical twist is going to turn up in anything I do. And it's very rare that anything I do ultimately is only one genre. [The Cabin in the Woods] I would definitely call a horror movie, but there's something else that's always going to slip in.

What is your obsession with apocalypses?

Well, clearly I'm not alone there. Apocalypses and post-apocalypses are very popular right now for two very im-

portant reasons: one, the world is actually crumbling. We'll have destroyed ourselves and our planet and we'll have nobody else to blame. And that's definitely going to happen. Two, they are cheaper to make because you basically just need some rubble.

You have some very recognizable monsters in your oeuvre, including Firefly's Reavers. How much input do you have into the design of these creatures?

It comes and goes. I will sometimes be very specific, as I was with the Gentlemen for [the Buffy the Vampire Slayer episode] "Hush" where I will actually draw the monster myself. I'll be as specific as I can because I love horror and I love great creatures. When an effects house has to churn out a monster every week you end up getting very lazy, you end up getting a lot of pieces from Babylon 5 stuck on spindles down and you lose the sort of "Well, what's the thing that actually would scare children, what's the genuine creepy thing?"

Vampires were such a huge part of your early career; why no vampires in Cabin?

First of all, I didn't actually have that many vampires in my vampire shows. I definitely wasn't as obsessed with them as America seems to be now. But at the end of the day, we did shoot a couple, but we didn't use any of the footage. Vampires don't look scary, Nosferatu looked scary — that was a great design, and there is some footage that does feature a shout-out to that classic design, but apart from that, vampires don't frighten anybody because they are either Bela Lugosi or they're a Master, you know, with a cape or what not and that's not working, or they're young and sexy and that's not working.

**Buffy The Vampire
Slayer**



How do you feel about all these vampire TV shows and movies that have followed in the wake of Buffy and Angel?

At the end of the day, I did not make the vampire myth as resonant in the modern world as it is. I made a show that applied it to teenagers in a culture where we now are applying everything to teenagers, where people who write lawyer books are now writing young adult teen lawyer books, because they realized what a voracious market it is. Teenagers are people who eat up myths more than almost anyone, and of course the vampire myth is ridiculously resonant for them. It's being apart from everybody else but not because you're an idiot, it's being apart from everybody else because you're just so damned beautiful, so it's going to work for a lot of different creators and it's going to work for audiences across the board. What the creators decide to do with it is going to be different every time, for me it was always a story of empowerment. It was never about the vampires and, in fact, Buffy existed before I had decided on vampires as her particular area of expertise, even though *Interview with the Vampire* [was a] huge influence. It was always about the girl, not the monster. I never worried on Angel and having worked with the vampire characters in the story for years and years, I did realize that there is something here that is absolutely resonant and it's going to connect with audiences no matter what, and it continues to do so.

How do you feel about Buffy and Angel continuing in the realm of comic books?

I wish I had time to write more of them... it's really fun to come back to those voices and just get silly with it, or very, very serious with it. Every time I get to write an issue, it's like a little present for me.

What are your thoughts on the Buffy film remake that was being talked about a while back?

I was approached after it was announced, but I feel like I told that story.

A lot of your projects have been for television. What's the appeal of that medium for you?

I love TV because it lets you create a character in a way that only novelists really get to and I'm lazier than novelists, and not as good with the spelling. I think if you find the right premise and you get the right cast and you don't air on Fox, you have the opportunity to do something that's so textured, and so exciting, and so worthy I adore television but it's a giant commitment because I can't put out something that is second-rate, not that everything I have put out has worked, but we're always in there swimming. — If you actually ask me, "What is your favorite medium of all?" it might be TV.

Have you ever felt that your TV projects have been cursed? You've done some really great stuff, such as *Firefly*, only to have it cancelled very quickly.

I think every writer feels that no matter what, and at the same time I've been lucky on a scale that's so breathtaking that I can't even believe it. Not only did *Buffy* go, not only did people understand it and embrace it, but it happened at a time that was really the birth of internet communities, when the creator of a show became recognized for what he was doing at a level that had never happened before. I think the problem was, I had a show get on the air and then I had a show get on the air. Both of them struggled to do it, but these were my first two attempts, so when I came to *Firefly*, I think part of the blow, and it was the worst of my career, and I think about it every day, but part of the blow was I thought if you did it well, they'd let you keep doing it. I hadn't written seventeen pilots and then finally made it. *Buffy* is the first movie I ever wrote and it's the first pilot I ever wrote.

Well, *Firefly* definitely deserved better...

Thank you. Thank you. I've always been a little bit shy, and again with *Firefly* I didn't protect myself as much as I should have. With *Buffy*, I ended every season with an ending, not knowing if we were coming back, so I was always protective, because I hate an unfinished narrative. My thing with the studios has always been just let me know so that I can do this right.

THE CREATOR OF MASTERS OF HORROR PAYS HOMAGE TO THE VISIONARY BEHIND HALLOWEEN, THEY LIVE AND THE THING

MICK GARRIS

ON

JOHN CARPENTER

BY MICHAEL BOYLE

How would you assess Carpenter's strengths as a director?

John has an incredible command of the vocabulary of cinema. He knows the technical, film school aspects of filmmaking and has an incredible knowledge of film history, but his sets are also very low-key and encouraging. He has a good time on the set, knows what he wants quite clearly and can respond to the questions of cast and crew with authority on the spur of the moment. He makes you think that this taxing and difficult job is easy. His use of widescreen imagery is masterful and his stamp is always apparent. He really likes to provoke the intellect of the audience. He loves the powerful moments.

Which of his films is your particular favourite?

I love *The Thing*. Apart from doing the "Making of..." [documentary] and special publicity for the film, which makes me feel so personally close to it, I think it's incredibly powerful and original. It's a science fiction film that doesn't feel like science fiction. The hardware is taken for granted and the level of acting, visuals and FX blend together to make an almost perfect horror film. There is no other movie like it — certainly there wasn't in 1982 — and any film that can remain iconic for over 30 years without losing its power is a movie to bow down in reverence to.

Which of his works do you think is underrated?

They Live. It's subversive, hilarious and so wonderfully politically cynical and satirical. That eight-minute [fight scene] is just amazing! I think it's a lot of what makes John so unique as a filmmaker.

How would you describe John?

He's very funny, a little bit of a hermit, and is as smart as can be. He doesn't suffer fools, lives vampire's hours, and has the charming heart of a self-deprecating

cynic. But he's an incredibly nice guy, is really fun to be around and starts every project with a fresh and eager enthusiasm.

You once said that "of all the directors [who emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s], John is — along with George A. Romero — possibly the most influential on modern horror because I see evidence of his influence everywhere."

Well, just look at almost every horror movie to follow in the wake of *Halloween*. They all exist in tribute to that film. Although John was influenced mightily by Hitchcock, he brought youth and vigour to horror. His films, especially starting with *Halloween*, were deeply character-rooted — characters you recognised and identified with — and the emphasis was on suspense more than the gross out. *Halloween's* influence continues to this very day. There isn't a teen horror or slasher film made since then that doesn't owe a huge debt to

John Carpenter.



The Thing

THE CO-FOUNDER OF TROMA GRAPPLES WITH BEING
FIERCELY INDIE IN AN AGE OF BIG BUSINESS

LLOYD KAUFMAN

BY ANDREA SUBISSATI

ASK ANY NUMBER FAN TO THINK OF THE MOST UNIQUE, OUTRAGEOUS, COUNTERCULTURAL, ASSURD, BALLS-TO-THE-WALL, batshit-crazy indie film and he's likely to name a Troma title. Founded in 1974, the fiercely independent New York City-based film studio has produced and distributed over 40 films that range from raunchy sex comedies to dark superhero satires that fly in the face of cinematic convention and are more often than not dripping with slime and rotten with nastiness.

Not surprisingly, aspiring filmmakers with an unorthodox vision turned to Troma to learn the ropes. The company that brought us unforgettable horror-comedy classics including *Class of Nukes*, *Vinyl* (1986) and

The Toxic Avenger (1984) also helped launch the careers of Hollywood heavyweights Peter Jackson, Oliver Stone and James Gunn.

But filmmaking is only part of Troma's revolutionary history. Co-founder Lloyd Kaufman (who started the company with Michael Herz) is a very outspoken critic of the filmmaking industry, censorship and other political issues, such as government corruption and the environment. In addition to writing, producing, directing and occasionally acting, Kaufman has authored a book series about D.I.Y. filmmaking and launched TromaDecade, a free-to-enter, free-to-attend film festival. We asked him to define Troma's place in the genre world.

The Toxic Avenger



How would you describe a Troma movie?

There may be monsters and mutants and things that you find in a horror film but you're not really going to be scared. You'll be shocked or you'll laugh or you may be able to enjoy the sexual nature of certain things but I don't think our movies scare you. They're really comedies, our movies are basically satires.

Speaking of satire, are politics just as important as gore in your films?

I haven't written and directed many of them but the ones I've made take subjects from the newspapers. All of them come from either the social values of the day or social issues or current events. In the case of *Return to Huker 'Em High Volume 2*, which we're currently finishing...the reason was the fact that the American schools have been inundated with junk food, which has made our students obese and diabetic. You know, it's a serious topic. And also the bullying that goes on, and another hot issue in the United States these days is the single-sex relationship, so *Return to Huker 'Em High* is based on those themes and others. The school shootings are in there, and the fact that America is such a violent country. There are a lot of those issues in the movie, and all of our movies. *The Toxic Avenger* was inspired by the fact that I got interested in the environment in the 1980s.

Have changes in media made it tougher or easier to make a Troma-style film these days?

The evolution of the industry has [gone to] come under the thumb of a small number of giant, devil-worshipping international media conglomerates. I don't know that you could create a Troma [film] today because the rules that used to prevent monopoly have been done away with. The rules that used to prevent the studios from owning movie theaters or controlling the movie theaters, those rules went away during Reagan. And the rules that required the television networks to play one-third of shows from independent sources, that rule went away under Clinton. That's why you've got reality shows, which are owned by General Electric, Comcast, NBC—they're now allowed to own all the content, so it's a much more consolidated world. There used to be quite a number of independent distributors in the US and Canada and France and Germany and Italy and now they're pretty much dead.

What is it like working on a Troma film?

The people who [do it], we expect them to be 100 percent devoted to the movie and to take the film very, very seriously. We don't take ourselves seriously but we take the movies very seriously, and anyone who thinks it's a fun party or that they're going to be getting drunk or taking drugs, they get thrown out. So they have to be totally devoted to the project, that's the only reason we can make a good movie. Nobody is there to make money, but to



Class of Huker 'Em High



Return to Huker 'Em High

make a movie that will be historic and will be something that the entire team believes in and that we know in the Troma of time will become a classic. And in return, they get a life experience. They come to be in something that is idealistic, that is not made for commercial reasons, although maybe as the case was for *Toxic Avenger* and the original *Class of Huker 'Em High* or *Troma and Juliet*, they became commercially successful.

You make many of Troma's films available for free online—what is the philosophy behind this?

We want to thank our fans, so every week we put about 200 movies and cartoons [on YouTube] just to thank them. I don't know how long we'll keep them up, we'll probably take them down at some point. Again, we're blackballed, so why not give them to our fans? We might as well book-keep our own movies. Our stuff is booklogged everywhere so let us give it to our fans in a nice, clean form where they don't get into trouble...I think we should be shared. I wrote a book called *Self Your Own Damn Movie* and I propound that file-sharing is a good thing for the artist. It's not piracy, it's sharing of art. If somebody is selling my movies, I don't like that. They're doing that in China, Indonesia and India and South America. But if some sweetie, simply because I'm making 100 copies and giving *Return to Huker 'Em High* or *Toxic Avenger* to his friends, I'm delighted.

THE DIRECTOR OF RE-ANIMATOR, FROM BEYOND AND DAGON MUSES ON GORE, SEX AND THE THEATRE OF CRUELTY

STUART GORDON

BY DEJAN OSNJANUČIĆ

IN HIS LENGTHY CAREER AS A GENRE MOVIE MAKER, STUART GORDON HAS taken on directors, producers and financiers in his struggle to preserve the integrity of his voice. The uncompromising filmmaker's work is known just as much for its outrageous gags (gags as being informed by the works of two giants of horror fiction: Edgar Allan Poe (*The Pit and the Pendulum*, 1981); *Masters of Horror* "The Black Cat," 2007) and H.P. Lovecraft (*Re-Animator*, 1985; *From Beyond*, 1986; *Castle Freak*, 1995; *Dagon*, 2001); *Masters of Horror* "Desires in the Witch House," 2005). *Rue Morgue* caught up with Gordon at the Parasite Film Festival in Montreal to talk about his lifelong love of horror and a career built on seeing just how far an audience will go.

Has horror always been your favorite genre?

Yeah, I love horror. When I was a kid, my parents wouldn't

let me see any horror films. And when I would see them, I would get terrible nightmares from them. I guess that was what they felt I'd have a problem with – and I did. But it was because I was not allowed to see them that I tried to see as many as I could.

Do you remember particular films that caused you to have nightmares?

Oh, yes, the first one that scared me, that somehow passed under my parents' radar, was *Abbott and Costello Meet Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with Boris Karloff. That movie scared the crap out of me. I had nightmares from that for some five years, I think. And then a few years later I saw *The Thing*. I told my parents I was gonna see a Disney film or something and it was this William Castle film. I had to bring my brother with me, and I told him, "You can't tell them that we saw this." As you probably know, they had the seats wired or that one, and when they started shaking...

Did you know about that in advance? Did you expect that to happen?

No, I had no idea, because they called it something like "Percepto" – that you'd feel the creatures crawling around you, this thing that they took out of a woman's spine, and it looked something like a spinal cord or a caterpillar. At some point it gets turned loose and it's crawling inside a movie theatre and in the movie they said, "If it touches you, scream, SCREAM!" and the seats would start shaking – I jumped out of my seat and ran out of the theatre, leaving my little brother behind. I think I must have been around twelve, and he was maybe ten. He still gives me a hard time about leaving him behind.

Dagon



So was it trying to capture that experience, or displicate it, that made you become a horror film director?
I don't know. Maybe there's something in that, like a cycle of abuse. You know, abusing others because I was abused. What I think it is, is this. I know what scares me, and so it makes it easier to scare other people. I know the things that upset me. I've always been drawn to horror.

Horror is still perceived by the media as a second-tier genre – innovative, perhaps even dangerous.
I don't believe it. I like what Stephen King says about it. He says that it's the reverse spiral of death. We all think about death, and that's what horror is all about.

"I KNOW WHAT SCARES ME, AND SO IT MAKES IT EASIER TO SCARE OTHER PEOPLE."

So you have no problem being called a horror director? You don't feel ghettoized?

Sometimes I do, but I think that people who despise horror are snobs. My feeling is that it may not be for everyone, just like not everyone likes eating escargots, but that doesn't mean it's bad. All it means is that it's not for them. What I think is funny is, if you look at all the greatest films of all time, the films that people remember, that are the most popular, that made the most money, they're either science fiction or horror.

They're certainly among the most memorable, thanks to the striking imagery they use.

(Re-Animator and From Beyond producer) Brian Yuzna had a very good point when he said that if you had to pick one image from all the movies of all time – the most popular image – he believes it would be Boris Karloff as Frankenstein's monster. Everybody knows who that is. So, horror leaves a lasting impression. What I think is really interesting about horror is that the people who scare us the most (are the ones) we love the most. Which is kind of strange because you'd think that people who scare you, you wouldn't want to have anything to do with them. But it's the opposite – you want them to scare you.

When did you first encounter Lovecraft? Was it also in your childhood?

Yeah, I started reading him when I was a teenager.

If you were not limited by budget, which story or novel by Lovecraft would you film?

My favorite story of his is "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," which I feel like I've done already. There's a couple of them I'd like to do, like "The Temple." It takes place on a submarine, and I think that would be a good story. Maybe "The Colour Out of Space," though it's been done so many times. It's about a family that's rebelling that would be an interesting story for a film. Another one I'd like to do is "The Dunwich Horror." But again, this was also done a lot. Or "The Lurking Fear," that would be a good story.



Re-Animator

"ZOMBIES ALWAYS WANTED TO EAT PEOPLE, BUT WE THOUGHT, 'HOW ABOUT IF THEY WANT TO FUCH PEOPLE?'"

BY JEFF LABRECQUE

Did Lovecraft's work ever give you nightmares?

The first Lovecraft story I ever read was "The Dreams in the Witch House" and that did give me nightmares. The idea of a witch coming through a wall into your room, grabbing you and taking you someplace else to do terrible things—that's a very scary idea. I also read *Shoggoth* while I was a teenager. Summerville was very hot in Chicago, which is where I grew up, and I ended up closing all the windows in my room. [Laughs] I did not put up garlic, but I thought he'd come through that window.

Are you still scared by horror now?

Yes, as a matter of fact my wife is always laughing at me, because sometimes I just leave the theatre. I did that on

one of Dario Argento's movies. It was *The Shrouded Syndrome*. I got up and left the movie. Even when I'm making a movie, sometimes I say, "This is the scene where I'd leave." I was at the Sitges Film Festival when they were showing Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* in the middle of the screening the projector broke, so I went to the bathroom, and at the next interval was Wes Craven, and he says, "I'm not going back there!" I did, but he didn't. I couldn't resist, so I said, "But Wes, it's only a movie!"

What is it that affects you most in horror films? Is it violence, gore, civility, suspense or something else?

This is how it works for me: number one, it has to be a well-directed film. There are tons of movies that are really bloody, but they're so badly made, they couldn't scare anybody. So, yeah, it can be about the mystery, but it's even more about the acting, caring about the characters. If you care about them and you get involved in the movie, then you feel as if something's being done to you. And that really is upsetting. For example, one of my favorite movies is Gorenberg's *Dead Ringers*. By the end of that movie I was on the floor, under my seat, I was weeping out. Then I saw it again on American television, and they cut out all the blood at the end, when they're killing each other. None of that was in the movie, and I was still getting upset because the acting was so good. Jeremy Irons is so great in that movie. That's what was making me squishy, really, it was him. [Laughs] And he said, "No, it's too real."

The Pit and the Pendulum



Circle of Fear



When you were making *Re-Animator*, were you aware that you were pushing the envelope?

I wanted it to have something to set it apart from other films. Brian Koppelman, who produced the movie, had a film festival in his house, which went for a couple of weeks, and each day he'd show me some movies. He wanted me to be aware of the movies that were being made at that time. As a matter of fact, it was Rosemary's Baby that had the greatest effect on me.

What exactly were your intentions with *Re-Animator*? Was it to shock people, to gross them out, to entertain them?

Well, all of the above. What I think Brian was trying to get across to me was that you had to have something in the movie that would set it apart from all the others. That's when [co-writer] Dennis Paoli and I came up with the idea that the dead people in this movie, and especially Dr. Hill, want to have sex with a living person. That's something you don't ever see in horror films. Zombies always wanted to eat people, but we thought, "How about if they want to fuck people?" It was the sexuality of *Re-Animator* that I think really set it apart. And when we wrote it, Dennis asked, "How is he going to have sex with her if he has his head out off?" Then he answered his own question. We knew that was the scene. When Brian was raising money to produce this movie, he did a poster for the movie, and it was that scene.

You were lucky to have a producer who actually wanted to push boundaries instead of the usual "You can't do this, it's too much" attitude.

Yeah, Brian is quite the opposite. He would say, "They can make this more disturbing!" He was actually a bit disappointed [with the movie]. He said, "This movie is bloody but it isn't scary." He wanted us to be more serious. But the comedy comes out of the characters also. It's not like we were winking at the audience, saying, "We know this is silly."

Why didn't *House of Re-Animator* get made?

We couldn't get the financing. I think the script is astonishing. When you look at it, how many films were made that were critical of the Bush administration? Two? Michael Moore and *Team America* and that's about it. And both of those films got attacked. In our case, the script is linked to the then-current situation where we had a country that was actually run by the vice president, Cheney, and he had a very serious health problem. When he shot his friend in the face we discovered that he had an ambulance that was following him 24 hours a day. There were paramedics six feet away from him at all times. So the idea was that, what happens when Cheney dies? It's obvious: they have to have Herbert West bring him back from the dead.

WHY I LOVE STUART GORDON by DEAN KAMAYEV

No one mixes sex, horror and humour quite like Stuart Gordon. Case in point: the legendary, much-censored scene from *Re-Animator*, in which the de-capitated and reanimated Dr. Hill is "giving head" to a naked and strapped-down Barbara Crampton.

Or, no one does the body horror quite so fleshy, gory and gobby. Just think of the unrelenting stench of *From Beyond*, with its flying carcasses, the mutated ichthyous doctor, the protruding phallic gland, the sadomasochism, the cello from beyond... and more!



No one ever used Jeffrey Combs to his full potential the way Gordon has in his films. He inspired not only his comic genius (in the career-defining *Re-Animator*) but also his dramatic potential, first as Claude Rains, then as Poe himself in the *Masters of Horror* installment *The Black Cat*, and ultimately just even more seriously as Poe in the live theater production of *The Raven*, directed and co-written by Gordon with other long-time collaborator Dennis Paoli.

No one honours H.P. Lovecraft with as much freedom, yet respecting his spirit and subtext the way Gordon does. Case in point: *Dagon* (inspired by "The Shadow over Innsmouth"), the closest anyone has come to a proper HPL adaptation so far, capturing both the atmosphere of a decaying seaside town, and the implied sexuality and sadism that one can read between the lines in Lovecraft's fiction.

No director from the 1990s has retained the true spirit of the Independents quite so consistently and subversively. This is obvious, both in the film Gordon has made (*King of the Ants*, *Stock*), and the one he was not allowed to because of the inflammatory politics. *The House of Re-Animator*.

There was no way to remark the script slightly to avoid that connection?

Well, we could, but now with Obama, you know, when he was first elected there was a lot of optimism, and people didn't want to discuss how bad the presidency was, really. It's one of those ideas that may resurface at some other time, who knows. But, in my mind, it was really about the Bush administration. We had Willem H. Macy as the president and all the surviving cast from *Re-Airulator*: Jeffrey Combs, Bruce Abbott, Barbara Crampton. I wondered, how could people not want that movie? Our projected budget was \$5 million dollars. It's a small budget, but some people were afraid to get into it because of the political implications. Bush was a very fearsome presence. Still, I get more questions about that movie than about the ones I've actually made. I think it would've been a hugely popular film. But it wasn't meant to be.

And what happened with your adaptation of Lovecraft's "The Thing on the Doorstep"?

It's hard to say. We've worked on that script for twenty years. It was originally written for an anthology movie. It was meant to be a short film of 30 minutes. And then we expanded it into a feature. It was before [the 1983 Lovecraft-inspired anthology film] *Wendigo*. The idea was originally for a television series called *The Asylum* and every week you'd meet a different patient who tells you his story. We had another story by [postmodern science-fiction writer] Alfred Bester, "Railroaded." It was a great story about time travelers who are committing crimes.

"IF YOU CAN THINK IT, YOU SHOULD EXPRESS IT"

How close to Lovecraft's story is your present version?
I would say it's inspired by it. One of the things we did with it is, we added a lot of sexuality to it. It has practically the only strong and prominent female character in all [of Lovecraft's work], a very powerful presence. One of the prob-

lems we had was finding the actor to play the lead role. There's a lot of sex in the script. It might have been one of the problems. Kenneth Branagh was interested for a while, but ultimately he said, "I can't do all this stuff. I can't take my clothes off and do all that." We made the lead character a psychiatrist, and he has a patient, this young woman, who he believes has a multiple personality disorder, but in actuality she is possessed by her father.

What do you think about the notion of going too far in terms of movie violence?

I don't think you should ever censor yourself. That's a lesson I learned when I was working on *From Beyond*. I'd say to myself, "Audiences are not gonna be able to handle this. This is too much." There was a scene that was shot and edited, that existed in a couple of cuts. It was a scene, right at the beginning of the movie, where Jeffrey Combs' character is trying to call the scientist guy, and he opens the door, and he's got a naked woman, all bent up, you know, and she has a nail pounded through her tongue, and Jeffrey's character unites her and lets her go. I thought a woman with a nail through her tongue was too much, and now every other woman has a pierced tongue. [Laughs] So that taught me a lot: never, ever censor yourself. My feeling is, if you can think it, you should express it.

What about a director's responsibility? Could you damage minds, hurt people?

I don't think that's really the case. It works the opposite way. I think you help people. When I worked in theatre I used to read [French playwright Antonin] Artaud, about his notion of "The Theater of Cruelty." His idea was that all theatre should be acts of violence, crimes committed onstage, because he felt that it's a way for people to get these ideas out of their system, that it's a way to purge these ideas, that it was a healthy thing, a cleansing. I think that's true. We all have very dark thoughts, and we think about murdering people, or torturing someone or whatever, and to express that through a movie, which doesn't really harm anyone — I think it's healthy.

From Beyond



THE FILMMAKER WHO UPDATED THE HILLS HAVE EYES, MIRRORS, PIRANHA AND MANIAC DISCUSSES REMAKES

ALEXANDRE AJA

INTERVIEW BY JOHN BOWEN
WITH ADDITIONAL MATERIAL BY MARC BY
AARON WILLIAMS

How do you approach reviving a cult classic like *The Hills Have Eyes*?

It was really finding what's going to make the difference. First of all, to come up with the idea of the back story of the Hill dwellers, something that justifies their presence and their rage, the way they act toward the travelers crossing their area. That's why we came up with the nuclear testing history.

What do you feel your obligations are in a remake?

There are no obligations, because I feel for that kind of movie from the '70s with my heart, for those Tobe Hooper, Wes Craven kind of films. The difference is that I think if someone proposed to me a remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, I would pass because *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is, for me, a big, big masterpiece. There is no movie so strong, so powerful and so real [as the original], which wasn't exactly the case with *The Hills Have Eyes*. I love *The Hills Have Eyes* for other reasons — for the dark humor in it, for some of the dialogues. But [I wasn't] made in a very real way, as opposed to *Last House on the Left*, which was so real. *Hills* was more like a very, very dark, edgy and brutal comedy.

Would you consider *Mirrors* and *Piranha* remakes, seeing as the stories are so different from the source material?

The Hills Have Eyes was a real remake, and when I did *Mirrors* it was like an adaptation, a new story. With *Piranha*, the studio bought the title but it's not a remake — it's a completely different story [with] completely different characters [and a] different script. It's more like a new movie than a remake of the Joe Dante film. It's so different that even the Writers' Guild decided it's not a remake. Our storyline has an earthquake that releases prehistoric giants during spring break, which is really the opposite of Dante's, with the military research equipment unleashing them in the river during summer. Of course, you find the same elements, the essence, that kind of idea. I was

just attracted to making a really fun popcorn movie with gore, full of dark humor.

You've covered atomic mutants, haunted mirrors and prehistoric monsters, and most recently a knife-wielding exorcist.

You know, *Maniac* is one of the few movies that really got me into the genre. I remember the first time I saw the cover of the VHS as a kid in the video club and I was so scared. I remember watching it a few years after and being completely sucked into the story. I remember the suspense, I remember the fear, Joe Spinell, faces that stay in my nightmares for a long time. When we did *Hillbilly*, it was really like a big homage, a big tribute to *Maniac*, and we did a whole scene almost shot by shot. I would have never dared to have touched the original *Maniac* if the idea didn't come directly from [*Maniac* creator] Bill Lustig.

Are there any other remakes on your radar?

There are thousands of remakes coming out, and there's about ten thousand starting to be developed by the studios. [Laughs.] Someone was talking to me about *Shock Waves*.

The Hills Have Eyes



THE INDIE HORROR GURU DISSECTS HIS PASSION FOR THE GENRE

LARRY FESSENDEN

in APRIL SNELLINGS

NEW YORK-BASED FILMMAKER/ACTOR LARRY FESSENDEN HAS BECOME AN ART HOUSE ANSWER TO ROGER CORMAN. Fessenden's own films — including his disturbing 1991 animal rights opus *Air Telling*; the 1995 satirical-as-addiction fable *Mobit*; and his icy 2006 environmental horror tale *The Last Winter* — are thought-provoking, extremely powerful works in their own right, but the famously scruffy outsider is perhaps even better known for mentoring some of horror's most formidable new voices: *Ti West* (*The House of the Devil*; *The Sacrament*), Jim Mickle (*Shake Hands*; *We Are What We Are*) and Glenn McQuaid (*I Sell the Dead*, *WMS*) have all done stunts behind the camera for Fessenden's Glass Eye Pix production company. Fessenden is also the co-creator (along with McQuaid) of the popular audio drama series *Tales from Beyond the Pale*, and has stayed busy in front of the camera with roles in *Xu's* *Wuxi*, *Jug Face*, and the upcoming *We Are Still Here*.

What first kindled your interest in horror?

I always say that I'm basically wired for horror. I just see the world through this filter of — you might call it paranoia, but I see it as a realistic understanding of the fragility of life and the potential for mishaps and disasters if we don't watch our step. So I try to bring an audience into that world view, which I think can also be a celebration of sorts of the little gifts of life and happiness. So it has a moral component for me as well. But more practically, I grew up watching scary movies on TV. I like the old black-and-white Universal films that had monsters that were partly scary but partly cut-

ters, so that also appealed to me emotionally. I think the archetypes of horror have meant something to me on so many different levels. That's why I continue to come back to it. And even as I grew up and was interested in the realistic movies of the '70s, I wanted to see those horror elements, and so that's why I make those types of movies that are part realism and part horror archetypes.

Some of your favourite filmmakers and films in the genre?

It's more about films, because when I was little I didn't know the filmmakers. I didn't know that James Whale made *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*. I also liked *The Wolf Man* and those films. Later on, you can't discredit *The Shining* as one of the great films, but Kubrick isn't a horror filmmaker. Even in the genre I would cite Roman Polanski. I love his approach to realism and bringing a sense of genuine dread into a story, but he abandoned the genre. It's well known that I love George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* and some of the zombie movies that followed. I loved *Marlow* when it came out, and *The Crazies* and some of his lesser films. Alfred Hitchcock is my touchstone. Now there's somebody who made such personal films, but for a mass audience.

Of your own films, do you have a favourite?

The cliché is to say the one I did most recently. But in a way, *Madfiles* is to be kind of my manifesto. It's obviously quite personal, but it's also [because] what I like to do is bring the horror mythology into everyday life.



Ruby

What are some of the challenges that are unique to making a horror film, that filmmakers in other genres might not face?

There's the expectation to scare someone, and therefore the viewer can sit there and say, "Well, I'm not scared so this isn't working." And that makes the whole thing hard because [scaring them] may not be your agenda. You may have other things you're going for, which is to sort of put someone off later — make them feel ill at ease and haunt their dreams. That's a different thing than creating jump scares. So you have to sort of hit different types of beats, and that's a huge challenge.

If you could change one thing about mainstream studio horror movies, what would it be?

They've gotta stop with the remakes. I mean, they don't know how to make horror movies anymore, because they're really just looking at the bottom lines. Horror has to come out of the culture. It has to be a response to the anxieties of the time. It can't be a retread of a movie that made sense twenty years ago. No matter how easy the new actors are and how fancy the new edits are, it's just gonna fail. Horror is an outsider art.... This weird, mid-range remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or *The Thing* — however skillfully it's done, it doesn't come from the culture of now. That's why those movies don't work.

It often seems that filmmakers today are constantly referencing other films, whereas filmmakers in the '70s, for example, were immersed in literature and art and experience....

That is the most profound truth. Whenever I work with an artist, I always say, "Bring me postcards of paintings,



No Talking

let me see a picture from Francis Bacon, let me see something that's haunted your dreams. Let's talk about other art forms that are going to inform the project." It's so important. And let's talk about real life — is that relevant to anything? Why are we making this movie? Just to make another movie? I think that's been lost, as the kids — and the executives, by the way — start just referencing other movies. It's always like when you're on a set and you go, "We're gonna do the *Pollergeld* shot!" That's fine as shorthand and a celebration of why we all love movies. But you don't want that to be what's motivating you. I always say to the kids, "Why are you even making movies?" There's gotta be something that's burning inside you, you know?

So what are some works from other mediums that have somehow informed your films?

There's an artist named Andy Goldsworthy who works with rocks—he builds these crazy things. I love Caravaggio. I love Andrew Wyeth and a lot of American painters who create moods of sadness and loneliness, like Edward Hopper. You see people in an urban environment, disconnected from each other, and those are the kind of emotions I actually find intriguing. You look at Caravaggio, and he was clearly the Spielberg of the arts at the time. The violence, the immediacy of his images, is just a whole cut above. And then you have, of course, Francis Bacon, who was almost directly engaged with horror. The other obvious inspiration in the world is music, and I love classical music and all kinds of ambient music. This stuff can all take you to a place that allows you to be creative and think about building images.

What frightens you?

I feel like what's truly unsettling is betraying yourself. You can look at that personally, as I did in *Wrist*, about a drunk who's basically in denial. And we do that as a society—we act like we're gods on this planet, and we have no responsibilities to each other or to the natural system. These things are actually terrifying, because it's almost a form of madness. Another thing that's always meant a great deal to me is one's grip on reality. One's subjective grip on reality can be terrifying if it starts to fall out of sync with the rest of the world, and so I'm really interested in madness. If I make a werewolf story, I want to talk about how it feels to lose control. So it's really our relationship to reality that ultimately interests me. We create monsters to express that, and that's what my film *Wendigo* [2001] is about: the kid conjuring up this mythical creature out of all the bits and pieces of his life. It's because he needs

something to hold onto as he finds out his father's been shot by a hunter, so it's that need for myth.

What advice can you offer young filmmakers who aren't lucky enough to make a movie with you?

I feel passionately that your film has to be about something that makes it worth working on and fighting for and slaving away over the course of years, if it takes that. Those are the movies that are gonna bust out—the ones that come from a personal place of real passion, where you're dying to say something, in whatever genre. Also, don't obsess over the budget. Go out and make a movie, even if it's your passion project and you feel like you should wait 'til there's more money. I say, get started. Or write a smaller film that'll get you fired up and go out there with your pals and make it. You can look for money forever, but you've gotta create your own community of people and inspire them and be inspired by your collaborators.



The Last Wrist



THE SPECIAL FX WIZARD REFLECTS ON HIS
WORK WITH AN ICONIC MONSTER-MAKER

MARK SHOSTROM

ON

RICK BAKER

BY MICHAEL BOYLE

THE WINNER OF EIGHT ACADEMY AWARDS—including the first competitive makeup Oscar for 1981's *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*—Rick Baker belongs to the generation of makeup artists featured on the pages of *Famous Monsters*. A protégé of Dick Smith, he assisted the master on *The Ewokets*, before creating a startling array of illusions for such films as *Star Wars*, *The Fury*, *Gremlins 2*, *Kid Wolf and Wolf*. FX legend Mark Shostrom (*Phantoms* & *Cell Deep*) celebrates his work—and rather wet—memories of toiling with Baker on 1981's *Videodrome*.

Videodrome must have been a blast to work on. Oh, it was wonderful. I think about that time of my life quite often, actually. Rick's crew on *Videodrome* was the same one he'd had on *An American Werewolf in London* and we were all just kids. We worked very long hours and just the nature of the stuff we were doing—the flesh TVs, the undulating video cassettes and whatnot—was so weird and different from anything else I'd done up to that point.

What do you recall of preparing and shooting the FX tests with Baker for the spectacular death of Barry Corvus?

Rick had organized a full rehearsal for the crew in his shop that was filmed by Doug Bewick on 16mm. As you know, in the movie, Corvus dies rather messily when all these bleeding, cancerous tumors suddenly explode out of his head and body. During the test, we were all positioned underneath the platform that we built, which allowed us to operate the fake Corvus body unseen, making it shudder and writhle. I operated the tongue and one of the tumors that squirms out of the chest, and it was very cool. My fondest memory of that test is getting soaked from head to toe by the gallons of blood that were being emptied down on set. I actually kept that bloody

shirt for years afterwards and every time I looked at it I was immediately transported back to that crazy night I spent with Rick.

What important lessons did you learn from your association with Baker?

I learned a lot from Rick about how to approach certain things and conduct myself in the business. It was an education just being around him and seeing the high quality of his work. I remember one day Rick asked me to empty some crates so that we could ship the flesh TVs to the Videodrome set in Canada. Rick had given me permission to take out whatever was inside the crates because he needed them. I pried open the first one and— to my amazement—saw an actual werewolf “change-a-head” from *American Werewolf* was packed inside. It had recently been shipped back from England and was still in the box. I looked in another crate and discovered the elongated werewolf body from the transformation sequence—two pieces that had already made horror film history. I was staring at these things and was blown away by the level of artistry and Rick's extraordinary attention to detail. It was an example to me going forward that I should always strive to make my own work as great as it could possibly be.



Videodrome

THE TEAM BEHIND *SAW*, *INSIDIOUS* AND *DEAD SILENCE* TALK
GHOSTS AND HAUNTED HOUSE MOVIES

JAMES WAN
AND
LEIGH WHANNELL

INTERVIEW BY DAVE ALEXANDER

Why do you guys love haunted house movies?

James Wan: To me there's nothing creepier, nothing scarier than a really well done haunted house movie. I look at all the films that really scared me and they're all pretty much haunted house films, like *The Haunting*, *Pollergeist* or even *The Exorcist*, which basically plays out inside a house, specifically a bedroom, with this possessed person. I'm a big fan of that subgenre. Leigh and I really wanted to make movies in that world but bring a new twist to it.

Leigh Whannell: After film school, James and I would hang out a lot and talk about this mystery film we were going to make one day. There was a lot of pre-in-the-sky talk as we discussed what we might be doing someday — this was obviously years before *Saw*. Inevitably I'd go over

to James' house and we'd talk about film, and it would start to get late, we'd watch movies and eventually we'd start telling ghost stories. And James, being from Malaysia, has got a lot of great ghost stories that his family has told him over the years. And I've got a few of my own. They were always "true" stories, something that happened to a relative or a friend. There's an endless supply of them. I seem to attract them everywhere I go, everyone has a real life ghost story for me. They're the things that scare me the most.

What makes ghosts scarier than, say, serial killers or zombies? Where does that particular fear come from?

JW: With an Asian upbringing, I would hear a lot of these stories derived from superstition within cultures and religion, and from that I would always hear some of the creepiest, scariest ghost stories. I remember when Leigh and I were working on *Saw*, we would always try to scare each other with scary stories, and I had all these ones I heard from my parents and grandparents growing up as a kid... A collection of them found their way into *Insidious*, one of them being the theme of out-of-body experiences, or astral projection. When Leigh and I sat down to do our haunted house film, we thought, "It wouldn't it be cool if we could provide the out-of-body experience with a haunting?"

LW: It sounds like a simplistic thing to say but it's just our personal choice. My favorite type of horror film is the one that scares the hell out of you. Unfortunately it's such a hard thing to do, to make a film that is scary, that I can count on one hand the number of films that have really, truly scared me over the course of my life. It's a very short

Insidious



Introduction: Chapter 2



list: *The Shining*, *Last Highway*, *Mulholland Drive*. It's just such a singular thing, it's so subjective. If you ask a fourteen-year-old girl from Kansas City what scares her, she'll give you a list a mile long, but her bar for what's scary is much lower than mine. I'm always seeking that out, and I think that need to see scary films is what James and I have brought to *Shadowbox*; we simply made the type of film that we would want to go see.

Ever been in a real haunted house?

JW: I'm not one of those people who pick up vibes, I'm not intuitive like that. I have a lot of friends and family members who have seen a lot of creepy stuff – ghosts and spirits and stuff like that – but I'm not one of those people. But I did have one experience that scared the crap out of me. I try not to think about it too much, to tell myself that it's a dream that I had. My mom and my sister and my family came to visit me from Australia, to LA. It's usually during the holiday break and I take them to New York for Christmas or the New Year, and this one time we booked into this particular hotel and stayed in this really big hotel room. There were two beds on opposite sides of the room and my mom was sleeping on the bed that's on the far side, my sister was sleeping on another bed in the

middle, and I was sleeping on the other bed across from the window. It was really weird, my sister was watching TV and I was falling asleep to my iPod, and I heard footsteps running, and then whispering. The room was black and I got up and said to my sister, "Judy, did you just get up to shut off the TV?" but she had the remote. Then, at about three in the morning, I woke up to the sound of somebody whispering in the room. I opened my eyes and saw what looked like a little girl in a white Victorian gown, just standing there crying. I didn't dare blink or look away because I've seen so many horror films that if I look away or blink, whatever was standing there would suddenly be up close to my face! I was stunned into stillness, and I just kept staring at this figure and then I reached over and turned on the light. Whatever that thing was that was standing there vanished. Needless to say, I screamed to my mom like a little kid. That's the only experience I've had with the "supernatural." I tried to work a lot of that into *Shadowbox*. I tried to capture that creepiness that one had, like when you see something in your peripheral vision. To me, that's the kind of thing that makes these films really scary.

EW: If I have, I didn't know it – that's the shameful thing!



THE DIRECTOR OF **ROBOCOP** REVISITS HIS BLOOD-DRENCHED
FUTURISTIC FRANKENSTEIN TALE

PAUL VERHOEVEN

by MICHAEL COYLE

EMERGING FROM THE EUROPEAN ART-HOUSE SCENE WITH A REAUME OF UNCOM-PROMISING FILMS, PAUL VERHOEVEN KEENED AN UNLIKELY CANDIDATE TO CONQUER THE TREASUREHOUSE HUBBIS OF THE AMERICAN MAINSTREAM. Early efforts such as the wartime epic *Soldier of Orange* (1977), the contentious coming-of-age drama *Spions* (1980), the Argento-esque thriller *The Fourth Man* (1982) and the medieval adventure *Flash and Blood* (1985) were all preoccupied with the dark impulses that drive and torment humanity. Each displayed such depraved delights as homosexual gang rape, a gouged eyeball dripping from a door's spy-hole, dead babies buried in mud, and wells poisoned with plague-ridden mist—hardly the stuff of Hollywood.

Despite this, Verhoeven's controversial works caught the attention of Orion Pictures and producer Jon Davison, who decided to offer their latest project, titled *RoboCop*, to the Dutch master. The resulting film was to become a masterpiece of cerebral sci-fi splatter, a blistering mix of high-octane action, stomach-knocking violence, searing political satire and gory, groundbreaking special effects that pushed the envelope for cinematic ultra-violence.

Described by one critic as a disturbing amalgam of "the comic strip and the snuff movie," *RoboCop* would catapult Verhoeven to the first rank of genre fantasists, spawning sequels, television franchises (*RMF15*) and an animated series, as well as video games, comics and toys. It has also spawned a recent big-budget remake, ensuring that its legacy is suitably reinforced for the foreseeable future, but according to Verhoeven himself, it could have all been so very different.

"When *RoboCop* was offered to me, I thought it was a

piece of crap," the 75-year-old director tells *Rue Morgue* during a phone interview from his Los Angeles home. "I was still living in Europe at the time and I can clearly remember first reading the script by Ed Neumeier and Michael Miner. After struggling through a few pages, I threw it away because it seemed ridiculous, formulaic and just so not me. The films I'd been making up to that point were mostly autobiographical and firmly based in reality with very little fantasy involved. I later noticed that my wife, Martine, had returned the script and was reading it. When she'd finished it, she stated that I'd made a mistake in dismissing it and suggested I read it again more precisely, which I did."

A robust reinvention of the Frankenstein story, Verhoeven unearthed layers of nuance, meaning and metaphor in the tale of Alex Murphy (Peter Weller), an idealistic cop transferred to the Old Detroit precinct. Together with his new partner, Lewis (Nancy Allen), Murphy pursues a van-load of armed robbers—led by bespectacled psychopath Clarence Boddicker (Kurtwood Smith)—to an abandoned steel mill. Shortly thereafter, Murphy is pitilessly shot to pieces by the criminals, and his mortal remains are acquired by OCP, a huge corporation that has recently privatized the city's law enforcement agencies. Morton (Miguel Ferrer), an ambitious young development executive, utilizes them for a radical prototype that he believes will become the future of law enforcement.

After having his shattered limbs removed, his head and body encased in five-ton armor, and his memory wiped, Murphy is transformed into *RoboCop*—an emotionless, automated human that patrols the violent streets. Whilst administering his own brand of justice, the cyborg soon discovers that corruption thrives not only in the stegan-

depths of the criminal underworld but at the highest levels of the company that now owns and controls him. RoboCop realizes that he must deal with the ruthless machinations of DCP executive Dick Jones (Ronny Cox) and the vicious thugs who killed him, whilst also confronting his own re-emerging identity and humanity.

Reading the script, I realized that aspects of RoboCop were very satirical and commented on politics, corporate greed and American television," notes Verhoeven. "All the political ideas and urban policies that are touched on—like the police and prisons being run by independent financiers instead of government—came from the writers. There were certain religious aspects that I emphasized in the story, along with the idea of RoboCop discovering his lost paradise at a previous family life that he is unable to return to. Ninety-five percent of the structure, characters and themes were already there on paper, so I decided to go to America and take this step into the unknown. I thought if Hollywood doesn't work out, I could always go back to Holland in disgrace!"

Shortly after arriving in the States to negotiate with Grips, Verhoeven departed to Vancouver for a week to helm an episode of HBO's horror anthology series *The Watcher*. Titled "Last Scene," Verhoeven's installment starred Peter Coyote as a tyrannical director who torments his lead actress in order to ensure that she delivers an authentically terrified performance in his new horror movie. Effectively using this experience as a "warm-up," the then-47-year-old director returned to the US and commenced work on RoboCop with a \$13 million budget and newfound sense of purpose, joining Jon Dawson in the search for an actor to essay the titular role.

"The first name brought up during casting was Arnold Schwarzenegger," reveals Verhoeven. "Arnold had just

done *The Terminator*—an innovative, exciting and terrifying film that I studied closely, as I felt there was a lot to learn from it. The idea of using Arnold as a robotic person seemed obvious, but we never made an approach to his agent. We realized that if Arnold was inside the suit he would look so enormously bulky it would be too much. It was then decided that the actor who played RoboCop—whatever his qualities were—should be slim, not too tall, and have a dominant chin, as this would be the only part of him that was clearly visible for the majority of the movie. So I would say that the choice of Peter Weller for the role was highly influenced by his chin!"

Preoccupied with the demands of pre-production, Verhoeven had inadvertently neglected one crucial element of the story—the look of the cybernetic hero himself. Dawson had first approached Rick Baker to design RoboCop's renowned suit, but the Oscar-winning artist was otherwise engaged. He next turned to Rob Bottin, the FX genius responsible for the jaw-dropping illusions of *The Howling* and *The Thing*, who Dawson had worked with previously on *Platoon* and *Twilight Zone: The Movie*.

"I must be honest and say that I had no idea who Rob was," admits Verhoeven. "I didn't see *The Thing* until after we made RoboCop, so I was completely unaware of his work. I was being blindly led by Jon in his choice of Bottin—and also in his selecting of Phil Tippett to animate ED-209 [the movie's other, entirely non-human droid]—but Jon had some history with these guys on Roger Corman movies. I later learned that Rob was the top guy in his field but, for certain reasons, he and I did not enjoy a good start to our working relationship."

The fractious beginnings of Verhoeven and Bottin's collaboration are detailed in Rob van Scheep's 1997 biography of the director. The author describes one early meeting in





which Bottin arrived brandishing a sketchbook with transparent paper laid over his initial designs for the production. This was apparently intended as a sincere gesture that would allow the Dutchman to make any revisions he felt were necessary. Instead, Verhoeven reacted angrily, interpreting Bottin's actions as nothing more than "an undisciplined power game." Although he is quick to downplay this incident, Verhoeven acknowledges that lessons did eventually boil over during a routine inspection of the life-sized clay model of RoboCop Bottin had deployed in his studio.

"I wasn't happy with it, and then Rob—who is a sensitive artist—threw down the knife he was using to sculpt the model. He said, 'If you know so fucking much about how to do this, maybe you should fucking do it yourself!'" And I did just that. I grabbed the knife and started cutting away at the clay. Rob then got even angrier! I should have apologized to him, but I'm not alone in my guilt. Both Ed Neumeier and I had been impressed with the robots we'd seen in Japanese comic books, and we wanted the same bulky shoulders they had on our robot. For all the wrong reasons, we were trying to push Rob's designs in that direction. Ultimately, it was good that Rob refused to go that way, but for several weeks he and I weren't even speaking to each other. In fact, for a time, I only communicated with Rob through Jon."

RoboCop was to be embroiled in fist fights, gun battles, car chases and explosions, and any costume would have to be durable and flexible enough to perform a variety of stunts. Bottin's innovative solution involved the creation of a suit in two sections: the first was a black inner suit made of foam latex that would be visible through the gaps in RoboCop's armor. The second was the outer metallic



shell covering the head, arms, legs, chest and back, which was fabricated in segments out of a pliable polyurethane and boasted a gun-metal sheen. Taking six months to construct at a cost of \$600,000, everybody loved the robo-suit—except the guy who had to wear it.

"We were two weeks into a [thirteen-week] shoot when the costume arrived and Peter Weller immediately hated it," recalls Verhoeven. "He'd been preparing for the role by wearing an American football costume and thought he'd have that same flexibility in the suit. Peter got into the costume at four in the morning and—because that first fitting lasted twelve hours and involved a lot of experimentation—it was four o'clock in the afternoon when it was finally all over. Peter discovered to his horror that he couldn't walk or move his arms. He felt extremely limited in his ability to realize this character's movements and behaviour. He also thought he looked silly and started completely freezing out. His freezing out then caused us to freak out!"



Such was Weller's loathing of the cumbersome robo-suit – and the infernal amount of time spent fitting the costume – he refused to wear it. In Verhoeven's words, this situation quickly became "a real catastrophic" as O'Connell threatened to fire the star from the picture and locate a worthy replacement. Since the robo-suit had been sculpted to fit Weller's body exclusively – and with schedule delays already mounting – a meeting was convened in one of the nearby trailers where everybody aired their grievances.

"It soon became obvious there was only one available solution: we simply had to give Peter the time he needed to learn how to move in the costume," explains Verhoeven. "So we decided to shake hands, stop shooting for two days and work together to make sure that we had something that was successful. Often during shooting, I would go low with the camera in order to make RoboCop look more powerful and graceful. We later viewed the dailies to see if what we were doing was working and it clearly was, but the shoot was difficult for Peter on a physical level. Each day, in the confines of the suit, he would lose three or four pounds of water and that took its toll on him."

The nukes did assist in making Weller more focused in the role, although Verhoeven believes that the actor's commitment was never in question. As part of his thorough preparations, Weller had read books on robotics and spent four months training with Mark Yakim, a professional mime. This helped him to develop a series of mechanical motions and fluid gestures that used the weight and restrictiveness of the robo-suit to his advantage. Weller also needed a subtle emotional dimension to RoboCop's movements by studying Boris Karloff's poignant performance as the Monster in *Frankenstein*.

"It all worked out in the end, but making RoboCop was extremely difficult," says Verhoeven. "During shooting, I was dealing with the suit and working with complex special effects and new technologies but afterwards I had ter-



rrible trouble with the MPAA. They were disgusted by the high levels of ultra-violence in RoboCop. They felt it was an X-rated movie and in my contract with Orion I had to deliver an R-rated movie. Naturally, the studio did not want an X-rating as that would significantly limit the film's release – especially back then. Every time we showed the MPAA a revised version of RoboCop with the cuts they insisted upon, it was rejected. We eventually submitted the movie on eight occasions before they finally said, 'Okay, now it's an R.'"

One early sequence that incurred the censors' wrath was the death of Kinney (Ken Pogue), the executive who is obliterated by the malfunctioning ED-209's minotaur firepower during a boardroom demonstration. In his original cut screened at previews, Verhoeven featured several meat close-ups of bullets tearing through Kinney's flesh as "fountains of blood" erupted from his convulsing body. Although choreographed and shot for maximum impact, Verhoeven insists that the MPAA failed to comprehend the "intention and complexities" of the violence he was presenting.

"By dictatorially demanding that we cut out several shots, the MPAA made that scene even more violent," he contends. "When the bullets are endlessly hitting the guy's

body, it becomes funny in a gruesome kind of way. The audience were left saying, 'Shit, when is this going to end?' By transmuting the violence down, the intensity and realism was increased and the exaggerated comic book feel I was aiming for was reduced. That sequence suddenly became more disturbing, when before it was strangely amusing. The only thing that relates some of the black humour is after the executive is lying dead and destroyed on the table some body says, 'Call a paramedic!' That line always gets a big laugh."

As harrowing as Kinsey's death is, it fails to match the severity of Murphy's later demise, which was filmed in an abandoned auto assembly plant in Long Beach, California. The police officer's body is systematically extirpated in a seemingly unceasing hail of artillery fire from Boadicker and his cohorts. To realize this, Botin created a highly realistic life-size puppet of Weller from the waist to the head — save for the right arm, which has been reduced to a ragged stump. The puppet required several people to operate it and it needed to be capable of subtle facial and body movements; it was used for various shots where Murphy's torso is riddled with bullets. It was also utilized for an elaborate tracking shot devised by Verhoeven (excused from the theatrical cut) where the camera glides behind Murphy's back as Boadicker administers the final coup de grace — callously shooting the stricken cop in the head at point-blank range.

"I thought Murphy's death should be horrific, as I always saw it as a Christian metaphor," explains Verhoeven. "Murphy endures this moment of ultimate suffering before he dies. He is then resurrected as a robot and, in my mind, there can be no resurrection without crucifixion. So the ongoing brutality of his execution is comparable to Jesus dying on the cross. The cruelty and violence was necessary to make Murphy's resurrection seem even more powerful. The metaphorical and philosophical levels of the film then converge at the climax when we see RoboCop literally walking on water like an American Jesus as he confronts Boadicker at the steel mill. For that shot, we placed a [grid] immediately beneath the surface of the water so that it looked as if Peter was performing some miracle."

Verhoeven gasps with feigned disgust at the mere mention of the ghastly departure conceived for Emil Antonovskiy (played by Paul McCrane, also the doomed deputy of 1988's *The Shy*) and executed with ghouliah aplomb by Botin. Described in the screenplay as "Clarence's wheel man," Emil's skits as a getaway driver desert him when he plunges his van into a vat of toxic waste and is washed out of the back doors on a wave of acidic slith. Staggering to his feet, he is left a smoldering ruin, his flesh sagging on his bones in steaming rages.

"The melting man was definitely more cartoonish and extreme in its specifics, and I think that protected it a little more from the MPAA," claims Verhoeven. "It was clearly a grotesque comic book parody of a person ravaged by toxic

WITH I LOVE PAUL VERHOEVEN BY MICHAEL KUPFER

These Paul Verhoeven films prove that the filmmaker has an excellent understanding of the genre.

THE FOURTH MAN (1984) Verhoeven regular Jeron Kribbe plays Gerard Reis, a neurotic bisexual writer afflicted with bizarre visions of impending doom, who meets the beautiful Christine (Renée Soutard [R]) and her boyfriend, Herman (Thom Hoffmann), whilst attending a speaking engagement. During romances Christine as a ruse to seduce her man, but discovers that her three previous husbands — who all met with tragic deaths — were in fact murdered and that he may be the fourth victim. A symbolist horror film punctuated with Verhoeven's characteristic wit and intensity, *The Fourth Man* confidently strides the line between steady Euro-horror and resplendent art cinema.

BASIC INSTINCT (1992) Routinely grasped with *Fatal Attraction* as an example of the mainstream slasher movie, *Basic Instinct* centres around a troubled cop (Michael Douglas) and his romantic entanglement with a glacial author (Sharon Stone) who may or may not be an ice-pick wielding murderer. A loose reworking of *The Fourth Man*, it substitutes the stiffer film's measured pace and playful wit with devious production values and heavy-handed shocks.

HOT SHOT MAIN (2000) A contemporary reimagining of H.G. Wells' *The Invisible Man*, Verhoeven's final Hollywood movie — as of this writing — details the experiments of Sebastian Caine (Kevin Spacey), a scientist taking on a top-secret particle remodeling program for the Pentagon. Caine is successfully rendered invisible but, unable to regain his human form, degenerates into sexual predation, psychosis and violence. Predictably for Verhoeven, the special effects are outstanding with animal and human bodies being dissected of skin, muscle and viscera. It's an expertly crafted, pulse-pounding exercise in action-horror.



waste – certainly not a literal or scientific presentation. It has several beautiful details like the skin dripping off the fingers. Personally, I find it extremely funny!”

Just as Weller had found parallels between Frankenstein and RoboCop in discovering his performance, Verhoeven himself began to see connecting themes between his film and Mary Shelley's novel. The director was particularly taken with the idea of someone, or something, being “fashioned from dead body parts” and then, after having some semblance of life restored, beginning to question not only his “irresponsible and corrupt creators” but his own sense of self. Like Frankenstein's monster, RoboCop exists in isolation – a “freak” without a name who is clinging to fragmented memories of his lost family like some half-remembered dream.

“That is what made the last shot of the movie so powerful,” he argues. “RoboCop turns around and identifies himself as ‘Murphy,’ because he has reclaimed his identity and humanity and is no longer a product. Now that was not my first editing, as I was originally going to cut to another ‘Media Break’ [the humorous newscasts and commercials that permeate the film] and a shot of Nancy Allen's character recovering in a hospital bed, having survived her encounter with Bodicker. But it was impossible to do anything after Peter said that final line because it was such a strong moment. When I went to the first screening of RoboCop in New York, I realized that word was something the audience was waiting to hear. Some of them even screamed out ‘Murphy’ before Peter had a chance to say it. I knew at that very moment, we simply had to end the movie right there, so I threw the rest of the stuff out.”

After several well-received test screenings – and finally appeasing the ratings board – RoboCop was released in July 1987 and grossed \$120 million worldwide. Attaining instant classic status, it inspired the likes of *Maniac Cop*, *Robot-Jax*, *Hardware* and *Accus Mobster* – as well as the inevitable *RoboCop 2* and *RoboCop 3*. Although Verhoeven professes to be no fan of the sequels – even going as far as to suggest that neither Orion nor the directors fully un-

derstood his sardonic vision – he does offer a tantalizing glimpse of his own predictably nihil idea for an unmade second installment he once planned in the late 1980s:

“My sequel, which I discussed mostly with Ed Neumeier, would have seen RoboCop getting involved with a dead woman who exists only as brains conserved in a laboratory. He could reproduce this female's image electronically on his program and would connect with her in a way that nobody else could. The last scene would have been RoboCop walking alone in the moonlight but – though his vision – we would see that she was actually right there with him. It was a rather romantic notion, but the studio was only interested in repeating the savagery and intensity of the first film.”

Although Verhoeven's Hollywood career leans heavily towards science fiction, there is no doubt that movies such as *Total Recall*, *Starship Troopers* and *Melvin Man* as well as his lenky 1992 thriller *Basic Instinct* – which plays like an American remake of *The Fourth Man* – are punctuated by moments of sickening physical horror. (In fact, even *Basic Instinct* is Screen 2 confesses that *Shogun* is his favourite scary movie!) Verhoeven has also given Hollywood some of its most memorable monsters in recent decades in the form of RoboCop's snarling ED-209 (described by its creators as “a cross between a killer whale and a US Air Force jet”) and the oversized, unrelenting intergalactic “bugs” of *Starship Troopers*. However, it is his first American offering that continues to enthrall – and disgust – viewers.

“I think the narrative of RoboCop is nearly perfect, I would say, and isn't slow by today's standards,” says Verhoeven. “The balance of the action and the ultra-violence – and the interjections of the news updates – also make it very lively and funny. The themes of death and resurrection, good and evil, the past and not being able to get back to it, are certainly serious, but even in its darkest moments – and some of RoboCop is very, very dark – it always winks at the audience. Looking at the film today after many years, I'm proud to say that it still holds up really well.”



A ROCKSTAR DIRECTOR ON THE PAIN OF MAKING
LOW-BUDGET HORROR FILMS

ROB ZOMBIE

WITH GEORGE PACHECO

I ALWAYS WANT THINGS TO BE BETTER. I NEVER THINK ANYTHING IS GOOD ENOUGH. It's only as the years go by, when you're so far away from it where you can hear a record or see a movie and think, 'That's pretty good!' I never think that at the time. It's always 'I could've done more' or 'That could've been better,' even though there are all these limitations set upon you. Even though I know I made those choices, it's very easy to play demented mind games with yourself, saying, 'I wish my movie was better' or 'I wish it was more like that movie' but then I go, 'Well... we shot for 30 days, and they shot for 500 days!' It's understandable that they have more complex cameras moved.

You can drive yourself crazy comparing yourself to other things, but then you might realize that, 'Oh, wait they probably shot one scene in the time it took us to shoot our entire movie.' So you gotta back off that craziness sometimes! With that being said, I think that the quest for perfection is always what you go for, because if

not, I don't really know what's the point. I mean, I know there are people who always seem very self-satisfied with what they do, but I never am. There are times I've had that feeling where I'm very happy. I don't hate everything. I can be very happy about it, but still always want to push further in my mind, I'm already on to the next movie, because you can learn and apply every experience towards the next one.

As soon as you're accepting money from somebody else to create something, you've already sort of entered into a contract where you're going to compromise something. When somebody tells me who to cast, I tell them, 'Go fuck yourself.' I don't want anything that badly that I would compromise for it, because at the end of the day, if someone hates what I do, but it was what I wanted to do, I can live with that. To be accepting because someone told you to do it, and then it doesn't work out? That's a lot harder to live with. It's been a rough road. But I always did my way."



House of 1000
Corpses



THE CREATOR OF PHANTASM LOOKS BACK ON HIS BEGINNINGS AS A FILMMAKER AND THE BIZARRE FRANCHISE THAT MADE HIM A MASTER OF HORROR

DON COSCARELLI

INTERVIEW BY JOHN BOWEN

Even some ardent Phantasm fans are unaware that you started making films at a very early age. Do you think that getting such an early start and being largely self-taught were determining factors in your fierce independence as a filmmaker?

I did get an early start. In my naive and youthful exuberance I swore that I'd make a feature film while I was still in my teens and to my amazement I actually pulled it off (with *Jim The World's Greatest*). Universal Studios even bought it for distribution. I never went to film school; my first year at UCLA they told me I'd have to wait two years to enter the film program. I'd been making small movies, documentaries and even TV commercials with my neighborhood gang of friends all through high school. There was no way I was going to wait around at college for two years just to begin their program. So I left college and con-

vinced my father to stake me in a micro-budget feature. That film was my college! It took four years, and it was certainly "learn by doing." They say that "self-taught is best taught," but the great thing about movies is that you don't need college to have some great teachers, and I did have those teachers in filmmakers like Kubrick, Polanski, Bogdanovich, Coppola, Murnau, Griffith, Whale—the list of directors I studied goes on and on. As to being "fiercely independent," there's no question that when you control a modest-budget film you can pretty much do what you want to and express yourself artistically without interference. I have had some bad experiences in which producers and studio big-shot types have meddled creatively. It's something I try to avoid at all cost. There's nothing more heart-breaking than having a film come out with your name on it loaded with mistakes made by other people.

Phantasm



What steered your career into the horror genre in the first place?

I think that doing a film in the sci-fi/horror genre was inevitable for me. As a boy, all I watched were horror films and all I read was science fiction. I think what really got me started is that direction was a preview screening of my second film, *Kenny & Company*. Kenny was a crude comedy about twelve-year-old boys. There was a sequence on Halloween night in a haunted house involving a man in a monster costume who jumped out, scaring the characters. To my amazement the audience screamed in surprise, they literally jumped out of their seats! For a young filmmaker—I was twenty-two at the time—to be able to make several hundred people jump in the air on cue was rather phenomenal. So I decided that in my next film I would go for screams, the more the better.



Phantom IV

Phantom is a very unconventional genre film in that it shifts from horror to sci-fi. At the time, it was a bit of a gamble. Would a film like that be received well today or do you feel it was a product of its time?

When I was a kid they played sci-fi/horror movies from the '50s on TV all the time. William Cameron Menzies' *Jewels from Mars* was a favorite and you can see its influences in *Phantom*. I was searching for a way to surprise audiences, to take them off the beaten track to a point where they feel they're losing control. Good horror films do that. You have to create a reality at the unexpected, and venting off into sci-fi and fantasy was a great way to do it. I think the typical studio films tend to stay locked in their genres and not stray. These films are more of a business proposition rather than any kind of artistic expression. There's no question in my mind that today's audiences would enthusiastically embrace a film that mixed genres.

Where on earth – or beyond – did you dig up Angus Scrimm?

Angus was the first working actor I ever directed. We were casting *Jin The World's Greatest* and Angus walked into an open casting call to read for the down-on-his-luck alcoholic father role. He was amazing! But Angus could also be very intimidating. The film was done on a micro-budget with a mostly teenage crew and we made quite a few mistakes. Frequently, Angus would be made to wait in a musty old apartment dressing room for twelve hours and it would be my job to walk back there and inform him that we were finished shooting for the day and would not be getting to his scenes. Without a word, Angus would pin me with a

glance and raise that eyebrow of his in what was later to be known as the "Tall Man glare." I would stammer an apology and hastily back out of the room, knees knocking. He terrified me then and I resolved to one day star him in a pirate movie or a horror film.

Did you ever imagine such an experience would culminate in a film franchise and spawn its own mythos?

Certainly not when we were making the original film! I was just trying to get the damned thing finished and hopefully get it into a few theaters. At best, my goal was to make a little horror film that might propel an audience member or two out of their seats on occasion. To think that some decades later people would still be watching, talking or thinking about *Phantom* was totally unimagined at the time. However, as I shot the film I was the first to see that certain things were working really well. Angus was terrifying as the Tall Man, Michael Baldwin was giving the best performance by a child actor I'd ever seen. Bill Thornbury was great, and Reggie Bannister was creating this supercool persona with the potential to be a major ass-kicker of the undead. The sphere prop was actually working as an onscreen drill-bit-killer and the black Plymouth muscle-car simply rocked. So I had a notion it might turn out okay. But, if anything, it was the fans who elevated our little tale into myth. They're the ones that created the word of mouth, the superheated speculation about what the intentions of the film were. They enthusiastically supported each and every sequel and swarmed the conventions barraging us with questions about it.

THE MADMAN OF SURREALIST CINEMA SERMONIZES ON THE SACRED AND PROFANE THAT FORM HIS MOST FAMOUS WORKS

ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

by STUART F. ANDREWS

"E L TOPO IS NOT A WESTERN. IT GOES FAR BEYOND ANY WESTERN. El Topo is not

a religious film. It contains all religions. El Topo is bloody. It is sexual. El Topo is mind-blowing. And terrible. El Topo is monstrous. And cruel. El Topo is more than spectacle. It is an experience for all of your life." So declared the theatrical trailer for Alejandro Jodorowsky's 1970 mystical western. It's one of the rare instances where such bold hyperbole is on point. Devoid of any self-censoring tendency, the Chirson born surrealist belongs to an elite group of filmmakers that includes Georges Méliès, Sergei Eisenstein, Orson Welles, Stanley Kubrick and Jan Svankmajer who fearfully re-shaped the medium to conform to their unique visions.

Jodorowsky himself stars as a black-leather-clad figure who rides through a mythical desert on a bloody quest to slay four master gunfighters. It's a symbolically dense, bullet-riddled allegory of one man's spiritual ascent that

proved to be the perfect fodder for the drug-fueled denizens of The Elgin Theatre in New York City, where it single-handedly launched the "midnight movie" phenomenon.

Three years later, Jodorowsky plundered a similar range of themes with his magnum opus *The Holy Mountain*, a hyperbolic tale of nine adventurers, guided by an alchemist (again, played by him), searching for immortality. A politically explosive film loaded with violent, religious iconoclasm, it caused an uproar at the 1973 Cannes Film Festival and was disowned by its native country, the staunchly Catholic Mexico.

With these projects, Jodorowsky was attempting something entirely ambitious: He was trying to create "sacred films," movies designed to catapult the viewer towards enlightenment. Whether or not he achieves this may be the subject of debate but one can't deny the ferocity of his intent. His sheer audacity is enough to instill respect for a higher power.

El Topo and The Holy Mountain are both examples of what you've termed as "sacred" cinema. What does that mean?

For most moviemakers, their culture is cinema. They speak about cinema, they live in cinema. I don't see myself like an industrial moviemaker. I am a human being living all the metaphysical problems of a human person who will die and who doesn't know what the universe is, who doesn't use his brain completely, only a birth and not the whole part of his body. I am in the unknown. I live in the unknown. I don't know what God is. And that pushes me to express myself in art. I don't even know what love is. I don't know

El Topo



what this society is. I don't understand the story of the economic system. Why are you asking me something like that? [Laughs]

/apologize.

I am an artist. I think of the pictures I write as art and I was trying to express myself artistically. That is the answer.

For El Topo, what attracted you to the western genre?

When I made my first picture, *Rando and Lu*, it was not a western, it was a metaphysical picture, very pure. Cannon [film distributors] bought my picture and cut it—they cut all the strange and surrealistic things [in it] and showed the picture [in this way]. It played a theatre in New York for three days and nobody went to see it. It was a big, enormous failure. I wanted to explain to a journalist in an interview that it was not my picture, that it was a piece of my picture, but nobody wanted to know. So I said, next time I will make a picture and every person will search for me for an interview because I will make a western. And then I came to Mexico and did *El Topo* like a western. But I cannot make a western. I make an eastern [laughs]. I was born in Chile, very far at the bottom of the world. And when I was a child, I saw pictures of cowboys. But I never thought it was America, I thought it was a fairy tale. It was a magic country with cows and buffalos. For me, a western is not an American culture. It's something like a magic world. My idea was to make some kind of out-of-time, out-of-civilization image.

There's a lot of discussion surrounding the violence in *El Topo*. And you've said, "Look! I'm making a mystical picture and you can't make a mystical picture without violence." Why is that the case?

Read the Bible. You will see a lot of violence, a lot of incest, a lot of mutilations, a lot of war. Religion means with violence. Read the Quran. In Catholicism, there is Hell, evil. What do you want? Read a newspaper today. See the television. See a woman making a child. See a galaxy exploding in the sky. You cannot make art without violence. Impossible.

You don't like to use zooms or closeups and there's very few of them in *El Topo*. You've said that cinema is about bodies and television is about faces. What did you mean by that exactly?

This is what I think: faces are the fitness of television. Also, dialogue is the fitness of theatre. Movies are not a theatre play. When you write dialogue or a song, it's very easy for the producer because it's not expensive to have three minutes [of talking]. But it's an illness. I make words only when I cannot show any image. What I cannot show, I write dialogue for, a little dialogue. As little as possible.

You got another actor to dub your voice in the movie. In fact, most of the actors in *El Topo* are dubbed by other actors. Why is this?

There is no one actor in *El Topo* who has his voice. You have colours, no? You are a painter and you use all of your colours. In movies, you are free to use all the voices you



El Topo

The Holy Mountain



El Topo



went. The black woman has the voice of a young male adolescent. The young blonde woman has the voice of a 60-year-old woman. Every person's voice was changed in order to create a very complete character. Sometimes, the voice does not fit with the image. In the second part, it's my voice, but in the first part, when the guy is a killer, it's not my voice. I don't have the voice of a killer. The voice I use in *El Topo* belongs to a bullfighter. I had a bullfighter who wanted to be an actor but I didn't use him because he was an actor, I used him because he was a bullfighter. He was a criminal, so then *El Topo* had the voice of a criminal, a murderer.

While you composed the music yourself, you incorporated some unusual methods, one being that you assigned a specific note to fourteen of your friends and based on the order in which they came to visit you, it

would determine the melody. Why did you devise this strange, almost Gaudesque approach to composing the music?

I decided to do everything in my picture – direction, set decoration, costume, historical elements, everything. I also needed to do the music. But I didn't know how to compose, how to do it. I was not a musician. So I needed to invent techniques to do the music. For example, I took pages of Bach and cut them into little pieces like a puzzle. Then you arrange the pieces by chance and obtain a melody, a fantastic melody.

It's almost like William S. Burroughs and his famous cut-up technique for writing novels.

I don't know, it's the Jodorowsky technique. I used it for every melody I discovered a new way to do it.

There are two birds killed on camera...

If you ask me this question, don't eat any more chickens and don't eat any more burgers. Don't go to McDonalds anymore. You understand that? When you ask that question, don't eat animals yourself.

Can you explain your fascination with people with physical disabilities because this is a recurring motif in your work?

This is art, you know. When you see the history of painting, it's full of weird persons, no? Goya, Rembrandt, you have Bacon. Why not ask Bacon why he likes monsters? The movies are full of that. For myself, they're a symbol. I show cripples because I think I am showing the inner disage of every one of us. In this society, we are altogether in spiritual illness, psychological illness. A poor person is an ill person also. That's why I show that.

George Harrison from *The Beatles* nearly took the role of the thief in *The Holy Mountain*. What happened there exactly and why didn't he take the role?

When I found him, he was in the Plaza Hotel in New York, a big suite, very elegant, [and he was] dressed in white. He was like a saint. He was on a mystical trip and he wanted to do *The Holy Mountain* but he didn't want to perform the moment where the alchemist cleans the area of the thief in front of the camera near a hippopotamus. He said, "I don't want to do it." I said to him that it's fantastic for the ego, "it will be a moral lesson to show your ass-hole on the screen." But he said, "No. Cut that and I'll do the picture." And myself, crazy as I was, said, "No. I cannot because it's important for me to do that." So I choose an unknown person. Had I cut that moment, today I would be very rich because Harrison would've done the picture. But he would have changed the picture maybe? So maybe everything is good like that.

There's a transition in *The Holy Mountain* following the scene where all the travelers burn icons of themselves. You said that you made a transition from a finely crafted approach to an almost cinema vérité approach. Why did you make that transition, and what was it about the burning of the bodies that paved the way?

In the picture, I showed the ego of the person. None of us is what he thinks he is. We have about ourselves a limited vision, an ego vision. But in order to get enlightenment, they were searching for immortality, you know? You cannot immortalize your ego. You are an everyday character. You need to burn what you are in order to find another way to be that is the essential way to be. That's why I burned all the bodies.

The Holy Mountain created a scandal in Mexico. At one point, you even had to flee the country with the footage. When you went to the Cannes Film Festival, they refused to acknowledge that the film was shot in Mexico. Why were they so upset?

Because the Mexican culture was a very national culture with its own style. In order to shoot *The Holy Mountain*, I searched for colonial-style architecture and the most famous Temple of Mexico in Guadalupe they have a national building. Then, in the street, you will see in the picture, there is a car with 40 bodies naked, full of blood. In order to put the actors inside the car, they were naked in the street. People thought I was making a black mass in front of the Catholic church. Something like that happened. They started to think I was making a picture against the Church, against Mexico. And there was a big scandal.

So why do they embrace the film now?

Because when they saw the picture they realized it was

WHY I LOVE ALEJANDRO JODOROWSKY

by STUART F. ADAMS

With his overpowering images, mystical concepts and scathing satirical sense, it's easy to forget that Jodorowsky is also a brilliant composer. His eccentric music conjuring up a range of complex emotions. Here are five of his more memorable pieces.

1. "BURIAL" OF THE FIRST SON

In *El Topo*, the title character rides out of the desert with his naked, seven-year-old son. As a rite of passage, the boy is told to bury



his first toy with a picture of his mother whilst *El Topo* plays this curious melody on a flute, which soon flourishes into a dizzying swirl of woodwinds and strings.

2. "UNDER THE EARTHS"

A sinister trumpet, warlike rhythms and nostalgic sentiment convey the classic feel of a spaghetti western theme. It falls as late a false sense of security because immediately after the tune fades, *El Topo* rides into a bloodstained village where everyone has been slaughtered. Spaghetti, Jodo-style.

3. "PSYCHEDELIC" WEAPONS

For his *Holy Mountain* score, Jodorowsky collaborated with jazz trumpeter Don Cherry (not the hockey commentator), who whipped up elaborate arrangements for the filmmaker's weird compositions. For the scene at the mystical weapons factory, the filmmaker indulges his reverence for rock with '70s-style pounding drums and distorted guitar riffs.

4. "THE PANTHEON BAR 'DEES MAKE MONEY"

Don Cherry's dissonant and chaotic horn arrangements perfectly illustrate the disorienting world of fakes, fakes and false prophets, as seen in *Holy Mountain's* Pantheon Bar sequence.

5. "CLOSE YOUR EYES"

The epic theme by Greek composer Simon Boovei (*Devil Is Topo*). Haunting Spanish guitar beautifully captures the strange, terrifying chimes of Jodorowsky's 1933 masterpiece *Santa Sangre*.

The Holy Mountain



not true, it was not a black mass. I wasn't making an abstract thing. It was a mystical, artistic picture. And it was showing with success in Europe and Cannes and it was an honor for Mexican movies. They realized the error they made. And they did receive me very well. When I made *Santo Sangre*, they treated me very well. They collaborated and realized I was not a monster.

It's impossible to understand your work without appreciating the influence of the tarot. What is your fascination with the tarot?

I was always fascinated by things I didn't understand. There are a lot of books speaking about the magical uses of the tarot, yet I saw only playing cards. I said, "Why? Why are they speaking like that about playing cards?" And then I started to study because it was so mysterious for me. I started when I was twenty years old but I only started to understand the tarot when I was 50 years old. For 30 years, I was searching, buying cards, because I was always very interested in magic. For me, magic was the highest level of art. An artist needs to become a magician. And then step by step, I discovered the right tarot, the tarot of Marseille and I started to understand. After a while, the characters became an optical language, an optical idiom. It's like English. You can speak tarot as you are speaking English, German or Spanish. And then when you put one card near the other, you have a concept and you can read the tarot. That was very important for me because I have mastered the tarot. This play taught me a lot of things.

You've also expressed dismay with theatre owners and promised that if you made another picture, you'd figure out a way to release it by projecting it directly into the streets. Is that something you still want to do?

Yes, if I do my picture with my money, I will make a picture to lose money, not to make money, because the desire to want money is killing the art of making pictures. When you say, "400 million dollars! It's a fantastic picture!" it's shit, because you see that picture and after three, six months you forget it. It does not change your life. I would like to make a picture with big letters, "This picture has been done to lose money!" and I would try to make that picture as free as possible.

You had very intense aspirations for both *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain*, you said you were making films because you wanted to change the world. What made you believe that cinema was capable of changing the world and do you still feel like that today?

Yes, yes, only I make a little change. You cannot change the world but you can start to change it. I think movies are an art seen by millions of people, more than books. A book can change history. The Bible changed history. The Quran changed history. There are a lot of books that changed history. Freud, Einstein. Why can't pictures change the world? Why not? They cannot change the world now because it's an awful industry now. It's only industry. But a good industry can change the world. We are forgetting the humanity in the curse to get money. But I didn't forget that I am a human being, I am not a businessman. I still believe we can change the world. We can start to change it.

CREATOR OF THE TETSUO SERIES REVERSE
ENGINEERS HIS OBSESSION WITH BODY HORROR

SHINYA TSUKAMOTO

INTERVIEW BY DAVE ALEXANDER

What's the nature of the horror in *Tetsuo*?

What happens within this movie is this: sometimes, within the world, there are things that come from outside to get you and they change you, but here I'm more afraid of something that comes from your inside. The inside of the main character as *Tetsuo* starts to change into iron. What I'm telling you I'm afraid of is that there are certain things that are inside you that can change into something else.

Where does this fear come from?

The time that I grew up in is known as a high-development era, so all of a sudden buildings were growing all over where I was also growing. And buildings were made of iron, but at the same time they stored some kind of feeling within me towards them.

Technophobia is a common theme in Japanese horror; it obviously shapes your film, but it's also been said that in your movies technology is empowering, such as when *The Iron Men* in *Tetsuo 2* becomes both a monster and a living weapon.

I believe technology and human beings can maintain a good relationship. That would be the ideal, but whenever the technology becomes more essential than the human being, then it becomes problematic.

Your work is often compared to that of David Cronenberg in terms of being about a "revolution of the flesh," as he describes it. Now do you think your movies compare?

I've never met him, but in the '80s Cronenberg approached this idea where the body of a human being could turn into something else, and I thought that idea was very interesting, and that can probably be considered an influence. As far as our differences, I can only say that I grew up in Tokyo, whereas Cronenberg did not. I actually never really thought about defining the differences between our work.

Like much of Cronenberg's later output your films contain very dark themes but aren't necessarily horror films. They either transcend genre or tie several genres together. Is this a conscious choice?

Inside of me I cannot really describe, but I have to say that *Tetsuo* is a series that could be said to be horror plus science fiction with action, that's also a cult film. I have been doing my own types of movies — like the *Tetsuo* series — that are inside a genre that includes horror. I think I consider this my own genre. I look into all genres of film and try to do a little bit of all of them. But as long as there are those different genres in the world, I'm trying to see something which can only be my own.

Maybe this is because when it comes to horror, every storyteller is motivated by their own nightmares and personal obsessions. What attracts you?

Of course I have the nightmares from my childhood, but at the same time there is that fear juxtaposition where you are afraid but at the same time it's an extreme pleasure. That's the thing that is in me.



*Tetsuo II:
Body Hammer*



CHRISTIAN CARDONA MUSES OVER THE LEGACY OF HIS MENPLOITATION KIN

THE CARDONA FAMILY

by DAVID KONOW

IN RECENT YEARS, WE'VE SEEN A GREAT EXPLOSION OF LATIN TALENT IN HOLLYWOOD. FILMMAKERS SUCH AS GUILLERMO DEL TORO AND ALFONSO GARCIA RUIZ HAVE MADE big waves in the U.S., and Latin horror has become a hot trend in the genre. Yet long before all this, there was a bevy of filmmakers who helped launch the cinema industry in Mexico, who also made some outrageous horror films along the way.

René Cardona Sr. and his son, René Jr., made more than 200 movies together, working in every genre imaginable. But they're best remembered for their horror films, including *Wrestling Women Vs. the Aztec Mummy*, *Night of the*

Bloody Apes, *Night of a Thousand Cats*, *Survival*, *Tentacles*, and *Goyena: Cult of the Damned*.

"I really didn't get a sense of the scope or scale of what they did until I was a lot older," says René Jr.'s son Christian, a visual effects artist with credits on *Black Swan* and *TV's Scream*. "It wasn't until I was a teenager that I realized the amount of work they did. This was the age I started writing my own screenplays, and I didn't realize how that coincided with my family history. The more I figured out who I was, the more I wanted to do what they did, which was an interesting evolution as I got older. ... There's nothing more natural to me than being behind a camera and creating a film, there's nothing that feels more right."

Wrestling Women Vs. the Aztec Mummy



Rod Sr., who was born in 1906, began his career at the turn of the century as a silent film star, then made his segue into directing in the late 1930s. Rod Jr. was born in 1939, and made his directing debut in 1964.

Their breakout hit, which Rod Sr. directed, was 1959's *Satan's Claw*, which pitted a space-bound St. Nick against a demon sent from Hell to kill him. The film eventually became one of many unintentionally hilarious movies to be mercilessly heckled on *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, but the elder Cardona was smart enough to create a movie that would be revisited every year.

Next came the wrestling monster movies *Doctor of Doom* (1963) and *Wrestling Marvin vs. the Aztec Mummy* (1964), both helmed by Cardona Sr.; the father-and-son team closed out the decade with 1969's *Night of the Bloody Apes*, about a mad doctor who transplants the heart of a gorilla into his dying son, turning him into a marauding simian monster. Essentially a remake of *Doctor of Doom*, it features some fairly hardcore gore for the time and ended up on the UK's infamous list of "video nasties."

"I've always felt horror is a genre that Latin filmmakers have always enjoyed and have been strong in," points out Cardona of how his family embraced the horror. "My dad did a lot of horror films, and I think Latin American culture has a different connection with death than a lot of other cultures do."

Cardona Jr. went on the heels 1972's *Night of a Thousand Cuts*, about a playboy who seduces women, brings them to his mansion, then feeds them to his army of flesh-eating folies. The poster wooed the audience, "When the cats are hungry, run for your lives!"

The ads also offered brutal insurance: if you died of fright from watching the film, "We will give you a nice but simple funeral, free of charge."

"I got a high out of it every time I see it," says Cardona. "No one would ever think to do a movie about a bunch of cats eating people. No one thinks of cats as the killer beasts that they aren't!"

The Cardonas' biggest US success was 1970's *Samuel*, which saw the elder Cardona back in the director's chair. It recounts the true story of a rugby team whose plane crash-landed in the Andes Mountains in 1972. Stranded in the snow and believed dead, the survivors resorted to cannibalism. Not dying away from gore, it earned \$13 million on a \$500,000 budget.

The following year, the Cardonas cashed in on *Jaws* mania with *Tiburona* (1977), which features a man-eating tiger shark lurking in the waters of Cancun. (It was based on a novel by Rowin Brice, an underwater photographer who also filmed the infamous shark sequence in Lucio Fulci's *Zombi*.) Though it's often dismissed as a rip-off, the Cardona Jr.-directed *Tiburona* had one thing Spielberg's blockbuster didn't: real sharks.

"I knew there were a lot of sharks hooked on fishing boats," says Cardona. "The sharks needed oxygen while



Satan's Claw



Tiburona

they were swimming, so you'd slow them where they wouldn't get much, and it would make them a little drowsy. Then they'd bring the actors and the extras into the water. But on one occasion, one of the sharks trapped loose, and it was fairly agitated. My father didn't tell any of the actors that there was a shark roaming around right underneath them that was kinda pissed off!"

The most infamous film in the family's oeuvre, though, was Cardona Jr.'s *Goyene: Cult of the Damned*. It was released by Universal in 1980, and over time developed a cult following. Goyene boasted an all-star cast headed up by gothic American character actor Stuart Whitman as notorious cult leader Jim Jones; the movie also featured Joseph Cotten (*Citizen Kane*), Yvonne DeCarlo (*Ju Ju*, *Lily Munster*) and Bradford Dillman (the original *Poison*).

Cardona Sr. kept making movies up until the early '80s, before retiring. He died in 1988 at the age of 81. Cardona Jr. kept making films until he fell ill from cancer; he died in 2000 at the age of 63.

"I could see myself doing similar genres that my father did," says Cardona. "Horror films, science fiction, action, things along those lines.... The family has a major imprint on Mexican cinema. They were filmmakers at heart and they enjoyed it. It's indicative of all the genres that my father and grandfather explored. They didn't do it for any other reason other than they loved telling stories, and I hope that's what people remember them for."

The Pit and the Pendulum



**HORROR'S BIGGEST AND BOLDEST INDIE PRODUCER
LOOKS BACK ON A TRULY REMARKABLE CAREER**

ROGER CORMAN

WITH MITCHELL BOAD ABRAM,
PAUL CORPE, DAVE ALEXANDER AND JAMES CRAINGER

FROM DIRECTING REPUDIATED, NO-BUDGET CREATURE FEATURES TO BECOMING ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PRODUCERS IN HOLLYWOOD, ROGER CORMAN HAS DONE IT ALL.

A pioneering independent filmmaker best known for squeezing every last drop of entertainment from his tight-fisted budgets, the renowned "King of the Bs" has directed some 50 films and produced more than 300 throughout his staggering career — most on budgets you could make by rifling Steven Spielberg's couch cushions.

As both a director and a producer, Corman has always been able to harness the fears and anxieties of the current social climate, and turn them into wryly entertaining low-budget fare. Whether it was atomic anxiety in the 1960s, the drug counterculture of the 1960s or the increasing ecological concerns of the 1970s, Corman's talent for coining a story idea out of a newspaper headline and turning it into big-screen entertainment kept drive-ins and hardtop theatres packed for decades. More importantly, however, his films always achieved a glimmer of intelligence in their lurid plots, brazenly standing out from the sometimes unremarkable schlock made by his uninspired competition. As he rightfully boasted in his indispensable 1990 biography, *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime*, "Nobody was making movies like these."

Many are quick to point to Corman's other accomplishments — his role in kick-starting the careers of A-list Hollywood talent such as Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Sylvester Stallone and Jack Nicholson, or his championing of Academy Award-winning art house films distributed through New World in the 1970s — but it's his staggering catalogue of genre films that still defines the

most accolades from horror buffs and his Hollywood peers alike. Corman's years of work behind the camera have earned the intrepid producer/director lifetime achievement awards from numerous groups, including the American Film Marketing Association and the Los Angeles Film Critics Association, not to mention a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. He's one of the few genre directors ever to receive one.

Rue Morgue celebrates the career of this self-styled film maverick who helped to shape so much of the modern horror genre.

Looking back at the films you began with — *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Nat of this Earth*, the *Poe* pictures — they are all genuine classics. Did you have any idea that you were making these significant contributions to genre film?

I didn't think of them as being anything at all significant, really. At the time, how could you? We didn't know. We were just making movies that were about the imagination, about the fantastic, the supernatural. Each of these films was shot on a ten-day schedule for \$60,000 or \$70,000, which even in those days wasn't a lot of time, or money. I was simply enjoying the creative experience that comes with working with horror films and films of the fantastic.

But that's really the appeal of these sorts of films to filmmakers, isn't it? Science fiction and horror both rely on so much audience involvement, of believing in the world the filmmakers have created.

I think that working in the genre of horror and science fiction and fantasy is one of the most creative ways you can work in the movie business. Going all the way back to the

The Unholy



**"HORROR IS WHEN WE
BREAK THROUGH THE
SURFACE AND TOUCH THAT
CHILDHOOD FEAR."**

—WES CRAVEN

German Expressionism period through the classic era of the Universal Horror films, horror and fantasy have given the filmmaker these richly textured worlds to play in. Taking a film of mine, such as *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, those were done on a very low budget. But by the time I'd moved on to a film like *The Unholy*, I had a bit more money and a twenty-day schedule, and there was a conception that we were growing in stature, although that wasn't the case at all. Because we were making these "bigger" films in England, the crews there worked much differently than the ones we were used to in America; over there, twenty days for them was like ten days for us! They were very slow by comparison, but they were very, very good at what they did. I think working in the horror genre particularly gives you a great opportunity to creatively express yourself in almost any way you want to. Sometimes you can move more to comedy, sometimes to pure horror, sometimes to psychological horror, sometimes to straight slasher films. You can go to so many genres within horror and even science fiction, that both are very much underutilized by people as far as their potential is concerned.

Why is it, do you think, that horror resonates so well with an audience?

I think horror really comes out of the unconscious mind. It comes out of a child who is alone in bed at night, and his parents tell him not to be afraid of the lightning and the thunder and that there are no monsters under the bed, but

nevertheless he is afraid of the lightning and the thunder, and he knows that there really are monsters under the bed. As he grows older, he comes to realize in his conscious mind that his parents were right, but that fear is still there in the unconscious. Horror is when we break through the surface and touch that childhood fear, and I think you do that in a variety of ways, using themes that are in the public consciousness at the time.

What do you feel are some of the best entries to tap into these childhood fears in the last 25 years?

Now, weirdly enough, I haven't seen as many recent horror films as I should. I see so many at the office that it's tough to go out on Friday nights and say, "Hey, I want to see a film!" I think Wes Craven has done some extremely good work, and I particularly liked *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. A monster coming out of a nightmare, I thought, was just a wonderful, original idea. I also liked the *Scream* films and John Carpenter's *Halloween*.

What are your thoughts on the current state of genre film?

I think that technically the state of filmmaking today is the best it's ever been by far. Looking back at the films I made, the effects for that period were very good, but to many they don't hold up to today's standards, although I think they still hold up quite well. As to the use of technology and the techniques available today, I think they're not always used the best possible way. There's still a lot you can do and convey without effects. The human imagination is the most powerful tool a filmmaker can exploit. If you look at a film like Robert Wise's *The Haunting* and compare it to what's done in film today, you get an appreciation for the fear he generated with sound effects and what you couldn't see.

There does seem to be this philosophy of "more is more" in filmmaking today, particularly genre filmmaking.

And that's not necessarily a bad thing, I might add. Our films never used a lot of blood and gore, for example—certainly not as much as they use today. Part of that was because the standards were much stricter back when we made our films, but I don't think we would have had blood flowing everywhere if we could have gotten away with it. I can understand the reasons for it, but I think it's really just a cheap, easy effect. I prefer to imply and suggest, and use suspense to frighten people. If I chopped a hand off in one film, I'd be compelled to chop off a leg in the next, a head in the one after that and it would just escalate out of control, specifically for the purposes of satisfying that expectation. I can't deny that the "gross-out" works, though. It's just something I'm not a real fan of.

So, what's your take on Lloyd Kaufman and Trash? Do you think they are too extreme, or a natural extension of what you're doing?

I think it's an extreme natural extension—I'd use both words! One of the things that Lloyd does is bring a sense of humor and showmanship to these films. Bill Castle was the master of that in the 1950s and '60s, where he wired the seats at the theatre to give people jolts, and had a skeleton coming out from behind the screen. I was a friend of Bill's and a great admirer of what he was doing. I think Lloyd's style is very much married to Bill's.

What about your Edgar Allan Poe films—have you ever thought about redoing those?

I was pleased with the Poe pictures at the time I made them, and I see no real reason to revisit them. I might do one other at Poe's [biopic], though, as a matter of fact I was even thinking of doing a biography of Poe at one time.

We've also talked a little bit about redoing *Little Shop of Horrors*, but at this stage, I don't plan to do any more re-makes.

How and when did you first discover Poe? What was your initial reaction to his work?

I read "The Fall of the House of Usher" in junior high school as an assignment and I was totally fascinated by the story. The setting, the mood, the use of language—I was caught up in the whole story, so much so that I asked my parents for *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe* for Christmas. They were very happy to get me the book, since I might have asked for a rifle or who knows what else. I read all of Poe's work and I loved it immediately.

How did you come to adapt so many Poe stories and poems?

I never intended to do a series of Poe pictures. I simply intended to do *The Fall of the House of Usher*. I had been making some low-budget films for Allied Artists and American International Pictures (AIP). They asked me to do another Poe picture, I picked "The Pit and the Pendulum" (to adapt). All the Poe pictures were successful but after doing six of them I said, "That's enough. I've done the best



The Fall of the House of Usher



The Hanged Palace

Common with Vincent Price on the set of *The Masque of the Red Death*



The Pit and the Pendulum



of Poe's work and I'm starting to repeat myself. It's time to move on."

What were the particular challenges of adapting his work?

Well, it was difficult to get an entire script from such short stories. Richard Matheson and I worked out a way to precisely use the Poe short story as the third act. So "The Pit and the Pendulum" story itself, which takes place down in the pit, was the third act of the film. We created the first and second acts to bring our leading man to that position, trying to make those acts in the style and spirit of Poe. That was generally our solution. We tried to maintain the feel and atmosphere of a Poe story throughout the picture.

Even though there's a strong emphasis on sex, violence and gross-outs these days, will we ever see a return to the theatrical horror style of your Poe films?
I think you might expect a little more theatrical horror in the future. The psychological undercurrents of horror, I believe, remain the same. Only they are expressed in different

ways at different times. Maybe the audience today is looking for a slightly faster-paced film with more cool jobs spaced throughout. Whereas in a picture like *Pit and the Pendulum*, [where] I built the horror to the final scene, in today's market, you have to deliver something early in the film. The audience's tastes have changed a little bit. They've been affected by MTV, by commercials and so forth, and they're expecting faster, quicker jobs.

You had a long association and friendship with Vincent Price. Even now, years after his death, it seems he's as popular as he ever was. What was it like to work with him?

Vincent was a great gentleman, a highly educated man. He had degrees from Yale and the University of London, and he was an art critic and an artist, a wonderful painter. I chose him for the first of my Poe films, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, to play Roderick Usher because of the presence he carried. He was an intelligent, urbane man and had a great sense of humor and warmth. He was wonderful, a pleasure to work with, and I was delighted that he agreed to do more Poe films with me. I was delighted with every film we did together. He was a very professional person, not difficult in any way. This way I worked with Vincent was the way I worked with all my actors; in general, we'd talk before shooting commenced, about the character, the subject, about what draws that character through the film. In my experience, if the director and actor are in agreement before filming commences, very little direction is needed on set. Maybe just a little bit of discussion to establish the scene and its place in the film is needed, because we've already solved any problems beforehand.

Would you say that your production company, New Horizons Picture Corp., is still in the business of setting filmmaking trends, or are you content to just follow them?

I'm not certain we are as original as we were a number of years ago, but we're trying to be. I [did] a science fiction/horror film for The Sci-Fi Channel called *Cyclops*, based on the ancient Greek myth, and I think that may be somewhat original. I don't think anyone's gone back to the classics, as it were, and tried to make a horror film out of Greek mythology...well, probably somebody has, I just don't remember. One thing I've learned, you never want to say, "This is an original idea," because somebody will always say, "You're forgetting the silent German Expressionist film of 1921," and there you're trapped! [Laughs]

*One of your more recent hits is *Sharktopus*—where did that concept come from?*

That was actually Syfy's idea. We had done well with *Deepstar Six* and *Alien Shark*, so they came up with the title *Sharktopus*. At first I wasn't keen on making it because you can go to a certain level of insanity with a title and the audience is intrigued. But go beyond that level and the audience says, "Oh come on, you're kidding!" and they're not intrigued and they don't go. I thought *Sharktopus* was beyond that level, but it goes to show that even after all these years, I can learn something. It turns out that *Sharktopus* has got more reaction from the public than just about anything Syfy has ever done.

Where do you think the future of B-horror lies?

I think that the future for B-horror films will be very difficult because the majors are now making the types of horror and science-fiction films we were making in the 1950s.

"I THINK THAT WORKING IN THE GENRE OF HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY IS ONE OF THE MOST CREATIVE WAYS YOU CAN WORK IN THE MOVIE BUSINESS."

—JERRY DEEDS

and '60s. They're making them bigger, and I have to admit, probably better. If there is a future for the B-horror film—and I do think there is one—it will be a style of filmmaking more dependent on the psychology and less dependent on the special effects. That doesn't mean these films will have no effects, because the costs of computer graphics and other effects are coming down all the time, but the "effects" type of horror film will be dominated by the more expensive studio films, while the less expensive ones will be driven more by originality and creativity in the narrative. At the same time, technology is improving at an increasing rate.

WHY I LOVE ROGER CORMAN BY PAUL DEARIE

Roger Corman's influence in Hollywood and the horror genre in particular spread far beyond just the films he made. Aside from giving eager film students such as Joe Dante, Francis Ford Coppola and James Cameron their first shot in the business, his companies New World Pictures and Concord-New Horizons cranked out hundreds of unique (and not so unique) B-films that continue to influence filmmakers today with their mix of audience thrills and cash-saving savvy. Yet his social conscience was always bigger than his budgets. No matter how schlocky the subject, the maverick director often gave voices to those who didn't have them. He broke new ground by focusing on then-ignored or scorned subcultures such as teens, Hell's Angel bikers and beatniks (he 1961 civil rights film *The Intruder* remains one of the poignant and haunting condemnations of racism in cinema. Here are his five best horror works.

NOT OF THIS EARTH (1957)

Space vampires ravage Earth in this genuinely creepy program, even that cast Paul Birch as a sunglasses-clad bloodsucker.



A BUCKET OF BLOOD (1958) Corman perfected the macabre horror comedy in this quickly shot beatnik blow-out about a phony artist whose sculptures are made-over corpses.

X THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES (1963)

"If I think eye offends thee, pluck it out!" Corman conjures his most striking imagery in this heavily allegorical and tragically fumbling tale of a scientist who gives himself incredible powers of sight.

MARQUE OF THE RED DEATH (1964) All of Corman's Poe adaptations are excellent, but this high point, with its exceptional art direction and chilling Vincent Price performance, may be his crowning achievement.

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND (1966) Featuring one of the most interesting monster effects of his career, Corman's directorial swan song is a time-traveling twist on the classic Mary Shelley tale that infuses the story with his style of social conscience.

I'm a strong believer in high-definition cameras — you can now get quality equal to 35mm film with high-def at a far cheaper price, and in the near future, the price will drop even more and the quality will be superior to film. As that happens, it opens more and more opportunities for independents.

Do you think the best genre films come from outsiders?

Not necessarily. They can come from the establishment. You can see it today. Jim Cameron is the ultimate insider, with *Titanic* and *Avatar*, but he started on the outside, he started as a production designer. His first films were done for the independent companies and then he moved to the majors. And with Jim, as with many artists, the work that they did as outsiders is as good or sometimes better than when they moved to the majors. I think they can come from anywhere, but very often it's someone from the outsider who is breaking the rules. For instance, the impressionist painters in Paris were rejected by the salon, which was a massive exhibit of paintings every year at that time in the city. They were rejected by the establishment, but twenty years later, they were the establishment.

You've made a significant impact on horror filmmaking over the last half century by making films that have always done well at the box office. What do you consider to be the three essential elements of a successful horror movie?

First, that it be a horror film — that you concentrate on

the horror, and deliver what the audience expects. Secondly, that the horror be tied to a combination of reality and fantasy. I think there's a certain fantasy involved in all horror, yet at the same time it must have some connection, however tenuous, to the real world so the audience can identify with it. Third, it must be at least reasonably original. You can never be 100 percent original, but a successful horror film must at least in some small way bring something new to the screen.

There are thousands of young and aspiring filmmakers who would love to ask you questions, but here's one they'd probably most appreciate your thoughts on. What is the most important thing any filmmaker needs to know to be a success?

In a word, preparation. It's the most important rule, be it if working on a low-budget or a big-budget film. You've only got a certain number of days to shoot so you better spend those days shooting, not figuring out what you're going to shoot. You have all the time in the world to figure it out before you start by planning your picture thoroughly. But know, however, that even if you plan your film to the last detail, you'll never anticipate everything and shouldn't. You will find that what you planned may not always work, that you may come up with new ideas, that your actors may come up with new ideas. You should always be receptive to that. If you can work it out in advance before you film, you can shoot according to plan but still have room to incorporate new ideas. That's been the key to my success in business, in film and in life.

Genre 13



ROBERT ENGLUND EXPLAINS THE NATURE OF FREDDY KRUEGER

ROBERT ENGLUND ON FREDDY KRUEGER

AS TOLD BY DAVE ALEXANDER

THIS IS MY INTERPRETATION. FREDDY EXISTS IN A NIGHTMARE. Freddy's not at 7-11, Freddy's not seeing a counselor about being an only child or that he was beaten as a kid. Freddy is a specter that exists now only as a fantasy in someone's nightmare. So the way I chose to play Freddy was larger than life. If I was doing a prequel for *Nightmare on Elm Street*, I'd be extremely involved in Freddy Krueger before he got burned and what made him tick, and playing him very real and very matter-of-fact and very psychologically defined. But that was not my interpretation—Freddy is part of a victim's imagination, so he's coloured by that victim's fears, and what fantasies and wishes that victim, and he's real/fict in all those things. So I play him that way. He exists in that exaggerated state, which is in that dreamscape. Freddy isn't sitting somewhere in a dive bar waiting for you to walk in.

The glam look that Wes Craven came up with here is the result, I think, of reading something in the *L.A. Times* about Cambodia refugees dying in their sleep because they couldn't wake themselves up and jot down their nightmares, or write song lyrics about their nightmares, or paint their nightmares to purge that. It's such a great book that this legend can manifest itself into this legend of this pedophile, this child killer that didn't quite go all the way to hell because he was burned alive by vigilante parents, [and now] he manifests himself in the nightmares of the children and the relatives of his victims. It's such a great book that he turns their own secrets and desires and fantasies and fears on the movies.

So, Freddy becomes instantly this ego of this great idea. And then Freddy himself is one of the first horror characters with a real defined personality and he loves his work, as I've always said. He's sort of turned a lot of teenage vernacular and contemporary culture back on itself in his enjoyment of his revenge. And he was unapologetic about this revenge. He's an utopian/utopian revenge model—he doesn't want you to understand why he's that way, he just

has to be that way. He's almost his own prisoner in his purgatory, and that's what his purgatory is: avenging himself for being burned alive. So that's kinda fun, you're freed from a lot of psychological restraint then. He's a fantasy, he's not walking around in a documentary. Freddy is, in the Jungian, Freudian sense, an exaggerated, stylized dream fantasy of his victims, that's where he thrives, that's where he lives. So there's freedom for the actor—you're truly free—to be larger than life, and I think all of those elements contributed to that success.

I think Freddy's own worst nightmare is beauty because he never had it, he never will, and now he's disfigured. When Freddy dreams of beauty, when he dreams of his potential victims and things like that, it's not really satisfying to him because he can never obtain that. He loathes beauty and beauty scares him, and he must kill it, he must end it."



THE LATE HOLLYWOOD PRODUCER TAKES US BACK TO THE BEACH FOR THE MAKING OF JAWS

RICHARD D. ZANUCK

by JAMES BURRELL



WHEN *JAWS* SPLASHED ITS WAY ACROSS MOVIE SCREENS IN THE SUMMER OF 1975, MOVIEGOERS HAD NO IDEA OF THE ROLLER-COASTER TRAIL AHEAD THEY WERE EMBAKING UPON, nor that they were witnessing the birth of a new breed of director: the Hollywood summer blockbuster. But before it took a tremendous bite out of the box office and made its director, 27-year-old wunderkind Steven Spielberg (below), into a household name, *Jaws* started out as a novel by a struggling young journalist and writer named Peter Benchley.

Upon learning of the novel, producers Richard D. Zanuck and David Brown purchased the film rights for a reported \$150,000. While sales for the book rose (it would eventually spend more than 40 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list and move more than 20 million copies), the pair initially hired filmmaker Dick Richards (Dwight Dillard) to direct the adaptation, only to replace him shortly thereafter with Spielberg, who had just finished directing his

first theatrical effort, *The Godfather Part II*, for them.

While filming got underway on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, in May 1974, *Jaws* would suffer a number of setbacks — from the inability to shoot on water, to the continual malfunctioning of mechanical sharks — causing the 56-day shooting schedule to balloon to 159 days, and the \$4 million budget to more than double to \$9 million. However, the additional expenditures paid off when the film was released on June 20, 1975, to positive reviews and long theatre lines. *Jaws* was the reigning box-office champ — and the first movie to earn \$100 million — until the release of *Star Wars* two years later. The movie still stands as one of the most successful motion pictures of all time, having earned approximately \$470 million to date. Little needs to be said about Spielberg, who would go on to direct and produce several of the most popular movies ever made.

Before his death in July of 2012, Zanuck, a veteran Hollywood producer and studio head, discussed bringing Benchley and Spielberg's terrifying vision to life.

How did you become involved with *Jaws*?

David Brown and I secured it off of Benchley's manuscript — we didn't know Peter, we bought it just off of the manuscript... We were able to get our hands on books early and just sweep them up quick without having much information. We had no idea how we were going to do the shark in *Jaws*. Steven [Spielberg] and I have often looked back and said, "You know, if we had all of the tools that we have today, we wouldn't have made as good a picture." We would have overdone the shark, if we could have just done whatever we wanted digitally.



Do you think that by not seeing the shark very much, it made the film more suspenseful?

There's no question about it. And the irony about that is that the shark was in the script in the first scene. But [the mechanical shark] wasn't working. So, it inspired Steven and the writers [Benchley and Carl Gottlieb] and myself to come up with alternatives. You just see that girl [character Chrissie Watkins, portrayed by stunt woman Susan Backlinie] being pulled back and forth in the water and then going down. You never see any sign of the shark, because we didn't have it, even though the script says it jumps out of the water and gets her. When it wasn't working, we added the barrels coming up and things like that to indicate the shark was there. But it was on dry dock. Of course, with Johnny Williams' score and that theme — that represented the shark. Had we had the shark working, I think it would have spoiled it. We developed a whole sense of suspense. And everybody said, "Oh, how brilliant, they withheld us until they showed the shark." Well, that was not our intention. That was just good luck, which we thought was catastrophic at the time.

You'd produced several films prior to *Jaws* but that one really put your name on the map.

Yeah, well, it became the number one picture at that time, box office-wise, and it was such a phenomenon that it changed the whole way [movies] are distributed in the summer. It was the first real summer blockbuster. It was the template for distribution patterns in the future, and that was true around the world, not just domestically. ... It didn't make any difference whether you were in a seaport town in South Africa or in Salt Lake City, the screams were just as loud. People who have no danger of swimming in

the ocean were scared out of their minds by this — kind of a natural fear, a basic fear that we have of sharks.

***Jaws* did for swimming what *Psycho* did for taking showers, right?**

I had been a swimmer and lived on the beach all of my life. [I] would swim long distances every morning. While we were making the picture in Martha's Vineyard, even I — who knew how fake the shark was and everything — would be swimming along and touch a piece of seaweed and get scared out of my mind. And I knew how phony everything was. So, people were literally afraid to go into the water.

The film was such a huge hit that it changed the industry's view of monster movies or so-called "B-style" pictures.

Well, yeah, it took off like a rocket. Today, pictures open at





number one for the weekend, possibly the second weekend, because there are such a massive number of theatres involved. But in those days, we were number one throughout the whole summer.

Jaws was also one of the earliest films to generate a large amount of tie-in merchandise — games, toys, books...

Noah, I even had a toilet seat cover. The merchandising was huge on that [line]. It all goes into the gross revenue, you know. At that time, we never had any DVDs, obviously, or VHS cassettes.

What was your impression of the sequels?

Well, David [Brown] and I did *Jaws 2* [Universal] did *Jaws 2* [1-0] and 4 [The Revenge] and we thought, "Well, how many times can a shark come back out of the water?" [For *Jaws 2*, we had developed a script, a comedy — because that's the only way we thought we could do it — called *Jaws 3, People 0*. And they went ahead and made part four, which was pretty lame.

You've produced various types of genre films, but do horror movies take a special approach?

I don't know, because if you run through my credits, it's very diverse and... I didn't really do horror per se, but I did do sci-fi pieces like *Planet of the Apes*, *Fantastic Voyage*, things like that.

Isn't *Jaws* a horror film?

Well, that can't be called a horror picture, really. It's more of man versus beast. Or at least that's the speech I de-

livered [to the MPAA], because they wanted to give it a stronger rating. I said, "There's nothing horrific about this, this is man versus an animal," and I convinced them to give us the lower [PG] rating.

If you could make any film, what genre would it be, and why?

You know, I've done so many — as either a studio head or producer. The first picture I did, when I was 24-years-old, was [based on] the Loeb and Leopold murder case. Compulsion. So, if you look at the films, I don't have any favorite genre. I don't think in those terms.

After 50 years in the industry, what is it that drives you to keep making movies?

It's very simple. I really have been brought up in that world and have thought about nothing else. I know the stadium life, lived it as a kid, and it's always been my burning desire to make movies. And that hasn't diminished. I'm 77 now and am as active as can be. And certainly working with [people like] Tim [Burton] is a factor, a big factor, because it's so exhilarating. But I wouldn't know what else to do with my time. I play tennis avidly, I ski a lot, swim every day and work out and all of that... I'm not the type that would sit around the pool reading the paper. I see guys much younger than myself who are retired and they play golf a lot. But that gets a little boring too. I see them fade away. I think you need the stimulation, and constant activity and I happen to love it. People say, "Don't you want to retire someday?" And I say, "Well, I give that as much thought as I do suicide." No, I just like doing what I'm doing.

THE DIRECTOR OF *I SELL THE DEAD* EXPLAINS HIS
ENTHUSIASM FOR THE EXPLOITATION AUTEUR

GLENN McQUAID ON WILLIAM GIRDLER

AT THE APRIL SNEAKINGS

WILLIAM GIRDLER USED TO TELL PEOPLE THAT, SINCE HE WASN'T GOING TO LIVE PAST 30, HE THOUGHT SCHOOL WAS A WASTE OF TIME. Girdler never went to film school, but he did manage to achieve his pain production, if only by one year.

For Girdler, rolling up his sleeves and making nine movies in six years was his film school. It was a brave choice, as he endured knock after knock from critics who considered him a joke. He never had the fact that he was a work in progress—that his audience got to see him develop as a filmmaker, warts and all.

Though his films, including 1973's *Three on a Moped* and the following year's *Abby*, are often unfairly lumped in with the output of Ed Wood, Girdler's work is closer in tone to that of Lucio Fulci or Don Coscarelli. There's a dream-like atmosphere and a giddy lunacy at work in Girdler's movies, and with each successive film one can see a marked development in confidence and style. At the rate he was going, it's clear that Girdler's best work was still ahead of him.

His last film, 1976's *The Menlo*, proved to be his most ambitious endeavor—phenomenological to the core, and as wild at heart as Fuku's *The Beyond*. Judging from that film's anything-goes aesthetic, we can only guess where Girdler was headed.

Later that year, at the age of 31, he died in a helicopter accident in Mendocino while location scouting his last project, *The Overlords*. Described as a time-traveling sci-fi adventure, it was to be shot in seventeen different countries and would have represented another giant leap forward for the filmmaker. Even the briefest description of the story—two warring sects of aliens come to Earth in search of an artifact—tells us he was onto something special. In a plot point that anticipated the twist in *M. Night Shyamalan's* *Signs*, Girdler's films were allergic to water. It's a safe to say *The Overlords* would have been a triumph of his fevered imagination.

Sadly, we'll never know. After Girdler's death, there was talk of *The Overlords* going into production with a script, based on his ideas, by Bullitt and Fantasio Mayayo screenwriter Harry Kellner. The film was to be directed by Marvin J. Chomsky, a prolific producer and director of TV movies, but it never happened.

Girdler was gone too young, but he still left his mark on American cinema and left us much to enjoy. He also had a way of staying ahead of the curve; check out his second feature, *Three on a Moped*, which tipped into the exploits of Ed Gein before *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* did. There is an authenticity on display here that foreshadows *The Blair Witch Project* and its ilk. Cozy up to *Grizzly* and *Day of the Animals* on a rainy afternoon, and you'll appreciate what he was going for and what he got. Track down *Abby*, his blasphemous spin on *The Exorcist*, and you are in for one hell of a treat.

William Girdler was an audacious and independent spirit in genre cinema. More than three decades after his death, he still is.



The Menlo

THE DIRECTOR OF *RE-ANIMATOR* AND *FROM BEYOND*
OFFERS HIS TAKE ON ONE OF CINEMA'S MOST
CONTROVERSIAL FIGURES

STUART GORDON

ON

ROMAN POLANSKI

by MICHAEL DOYLE

ROMAN POLANSKI WAS BORN IN PARIS, IN 1933, OF POLISH-JEWISH PARENTS WHO RETURNED TO POLAND RATHER UNFORTUNATELY — just two years before the Nazis occupied the country. Surviving the death of his mother in a concentration camp when he was eight years old, Polanski seduced the horrors of the Krakow ghetto, hiding out for eighteen months as a "child orphan" and, according to the director himself, passing himself off as Aryian with the aid of "a wax forehead."

Such ingenuity and guile would serve Polanski well in his moviemaking career, which took him from film school in Lodz and the constraints of an austere post-war communist regime to the hedonism of swinging London and late '60s Hollywood. During this period, Polanski created a series of diverse masterworks beginning with his unsettling debut, *Kidnapped in the Winter* (1962), which was nominated for a Best Foreign Film Oscar, and continuing on with such idiosyncratic classics as *Repulsion* (1965), *The Fearless Vampire Killers* (1967), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *Macbeth* (1971), *Chinatown* (1974) and *The Tenant* (1976).

Polanski's achievements have often been overshadowed by his personal life. In 1969, his second wife, Sharon Tate, and their unborn child, were murdered by members of the Manson Family. Eight years later, Polanski fled America after a scandal involving the alleged rape of a thirteen-year-old girl. Retreating to Europe — where he has remained ever since — Polanski has continued to make films, winning an Academy Award in 2003 for *The Pianist*.

He remains a hugely divisive figure, however, one who still darts the brilliant power of his cinema, which continues to enthrall and disturb audiences. The recurring themes of his films — paranoia, psychosis, violence, voyeurism and

deviant sexuality — are enriched by his complex characterizations, absurdist humor, revolutionary camera techniques and a fearless commitment to exploring the darkest aspects of the human condition.

Filmmaker Stuart Gordon, a long-time admirer of Polanski's work, offers Rue Morgue his own thoughts on the unrivaled triumphs and desperate tragedies of a controversial film artist.

When did you first become acquainted with the cinema of Roman Polanski?

It was when I was in college and I first saw *Chinatown* in the Winter. I was hugely impressed with the skill and maturity he displayed with that debut film. I subsequently followed Polanski's career very closely and became a big fan of his work.

In your mind, what are the strongest characteristics of his movies?

I don't think anyone is better at making a subjective film in which you deeply perceive things from the point of view of the main character. When you watch Polanski's movies, you feel like you are the main protagonist and I think that is his greatest strength as a filmmaker. In fact, when I made *Re-Animator*, I used *Rosemary's Baby* as sort of my model. I'd never made a film before and I was very taken with the way Polanski shot that movie. You almost never see a close-up of Mia Farrow and are always looking over her shoulder. So when people are talking to Rosemary, they are almost talking to the camera and that's a technique I've used in a lot of my films. I often say that *Rosemary's Baby* was my film school, because I ended up adopting several of Polanski's methods.

*There is a concentration on paranoia and claustrophobia in *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*. Is the way those films chart a bleak descent into madness and violence.*

Yes, and Polanski really puts the audience in the mind of Catherine Deneuve. In *Repulsion* you are seeing things the way she sees them, as opposed to a movie like *Psycho* where Hitchcock keeps you at somewhat of a distance. We don't ever get into the mind of Norman Bates in *Psycho*, but in *Repulsion* and *The Tenant*, Polanski really leads us into that dark and lonely place — into the mind of an insane person who is hallucinating and so forth. It's incredibly disturbing.

A lot of critics have difficulty separating the depiction of violence in Polanski's work from the tragedies of his personal life. would you agree?

Well, I certainly think that Polanski has experienced the real thing. Unlike most of us directors, the stuff that he's gone through personally has been hellish — starting with his traumatic childhood during World War II, and moving on to the Manson murders where his wife and child were brutally murdered. Polanski has really known violence and death first-hand and maybe that's another reason why his films contain such remarkable power.

*It's difficult to watch the disturbing slaughter of *Macbeth's* family in *Macbeth* — perhaps Polanski's most violent film — without immediately thinking of the Manson murders that occurred just two years prior.*

Polanski's *Macbeth* might be the best *Macbeth* I've ever seen, actually, but yeah, it's hard not to recall the murders when you view that particular sequence. What strikes me most about Polanski's work is that he doesn't enter fetch. He just plunges right into the heart of darkness. Another interesting thing in his autobiography, he talks about studying the way human beings actually see things. It's a book about vision and how the eye works and so forth. Polanski incorporates certain details into his films which give them an extra sense of reality, and this knowledge is probably why they feel so ruthlessly objective. He also likes to really play with the audience.

Can you give me an example of his playfulness?

There's a famous story about when he was making *Rosemary's Baby*. Polanski was shooting a scene where John Cassavetes is on the telephone in the bedroom and Mia Farrow is in the foreground. Polanski kept telling the cameraman to move the camera to the right, but the cameraman replied, "If I do that we are not going to see Cassavetes very well." Polanski insisted that he do it and I think it's the best shot of all you can see in the shot is Cassavetes' knee. When *Rosemary's Baby* eventually played in the theatre and that scene arrived, the whole

audience was leaning and straining to look around the corner and see Cassavetes! [Laughs.]

Do Polanski's films still inspire and unsettle you?

Yes, and I continue to watch and re-watch them. It's funny, but every time I see *Rosemary's Baby* on television I simply cannot turn it off. No matter how many times I've seen that movie, it's so compelling I just have to sit there and deal with it all over again. Every aspect of *Rosemary's Baby* — from the casting and performances to the direction and score — is amazing and an endless source of inspiration to me.



Rosemary's Baby



The Tenant

THE STAR OF THE FOG, CREEPSHOW AND SWAMP THING TALKS ABOUT HER MOST MEMORABLE HORROR ROLES

ADRIENNE BARBEAU

by JAMES BURRELL

SHE'S FOUGHT OFF THE MIST-CROUDED CROSTHS OF LEPROUS MARINERS in 1980's *The Fog*, was the object of affection of a half-pint, half-monster in 1982's *Swamp Thing*, was made lunch of by a ravenous, hairy monster in *Creepshow* (also released in '82), presided over a colony of iron-eating rats in the 1985 TV movie *Royal of the Rats* and was a gun-toting, motorcycle-riding slayer of demonic nuns in 2000's *The Convent*. But though she's perhaps best known by audiences around the world for her work in horror movies, Adrienne Barbeau never set out to be a scream queen.

Born in Sacramento, California, on June 11, 1945, she took singing lessons while in school, and later joined the San Jose Light Opera in 1963, where she performed in a musical revue for US servicemen stationed in Southeast Asia. After a friend suggested she travel to New York to further her acting career, Barbeau worked nights as a go-go dancer while she went on auditions during the day. Landing

her big break on Broadway, she was cast as second daughter, Hodel, in the hit play *Fiddler on the Roof*, with an up-and-coming Bette Midler. Leaving the show in 1971, she went on to appear in the original Broadway production of *Grotesque*, where she would earn both a 1972 Tony Award nomination and a Theater World Award for her portrayal of tough-talking "Pink Lady" Betty Nizzo.

Making her entrance into television, Barbeau appeared as Carol Taynot, the outspoken, divorced daughter of Maude Findley (Bea Arthur) in the hit TV series *Maude* (1972-78). Barbeau's television work also included appearances in several TV movies, including *The Great Outdoors*, and guest roles in such series as *Gunsy, M.E.* and *Fantasy Island*.

In 1978, Barbeau appeared in the made-for-TV thriller *Someone's Watching Me!*, playing Sophie, the doomed friend of a glamorous television director menaced by an unseen killer. The film is notable for Barbeau's character being one of the first lesbian roles featured on prime-time TV, as well as it being the project on which she met director John Carpenter. The couple married a few months after the film wrapped, on January 1, 1979 (and would stay together until late 1984), during which time Barbeau appeared in several of Carpenter's films, including *The Fog*, playing radio disc jockey Stevie Wayne, who warns the residents of the seaside village of Antonio Bay that the glowing blue mist rolling in off the shore is deadly; *Escape from New York* (1982), where she was the gun-toting tagalong, who gives up her life to help Snake Pliskien escape Manhattan, and in an uncredited role as the voice of MacReady's computerized chess game in *The Thing* (1982).

Escape from
New York



Other popular genre roles included that of government agent Alice Cable in Wes Craven's adaptation of DC Comics' *Scream Thing*, and shrewish wife Wilma Northrup, who gets her comeuppance in a segment of George Romero's *Creepshow*. Barbeau and Romero would collaborate again on *Two Evil Eyes* (1980), which featured segments directed by both Romero and Dario Argento.

Away from horror, Barbeau has shown a flair for comedy with appearances in such films as 1981's *The Cannonball Run*, 1996's *Back to School*, and the cult spoof *Cannibal Ferox* in the *Avocado Jungle of Death* (1969), as well as in multiple appearances on TV's *The Drew Carey Show* (1995-2004). In the early 1990s, she became known to a new generation of fans when she supplied the voice of Catwoman in *Batman: The Animated Series* (1992-95). Barbeau also had a role as Ruffie, the snake dancer in the critically acclaimed HBO series *Carnivale* (2002-05). Returning to the stage in 2006, she appeared as Judy Garland in *The Property Kidnaper as Garland*. Most recently, the actress had parts in the Academy Award-winning *Argo* (2012), TV's *General Hospital*, and *State of Anarchy*.

In recent years she also branched out into writing, and had three books published: her 2006 autobiography *There Are Worse Things I Could Do*, and two novels, *Wampyres of Hollywood* (2009) and *Love Rides* (2010). She is presently working on a third novel. We got Barbeau on the phone to help us look back on her amazing career.

How did you get started as an actress?

My first professional acting job was with the San Jose Light Opera. After I graduated high school, I got called to

go over and entertain troops stationed in "the Orient," which is what they called Southeast Asia back then. After I returned, a friend of mine told me I should move to New York, where I could take acting classes and go to auditions. But I never planned to become an actor. I thought I would get my degree and teach acting. It never occurred to me that I should pursue acting as a career.

How did you get involved with your first John Carpenter movie, *Someone's Watching Me?*

I think John had seen me in [the TV series] *Murder, She Wrote*, liked me and saw something in my portrayal, and was attracted to that strong "Hawkesian woman" character. It was a great, unusual role for the time, one of the first gay female characters on TV.

After *Someone's Watching Me*, you of course starred in Carpenter's next feature, *The Fog*. Do you recall any challenges while making the movie?

Well, near the end of the film when I'm on the roof of the lighthouse with the ghosts, we had to shoot the scene in



The Fog



The Fog

reverses because this was long before CGI, and they could blow the fog in, but they couldn't get it back out again. I had to make sure that I didn't blink, or if I did, I had to do it very slowly, because blinking would look weird on film.

Carpenter has stated that he wasn't happy with the way The Fog was coming together during the editing stage and had to go back to reshoot some additional footage for it. He went out with a small crew to do some reshoots in order to "amp up" the scare factor. Were you involved with any of that?

No, I don't think so. I think what John had done were the scenes of the young man in the grocery store, the cars with their horns and lights on in the parking lot, the scene with Nancy Kyes (a.k.a. Nancy Lenehan), where her television set moves across the living room floor, and the close-up scenes of the ghosts smooching through the stained glass windows in the church.

By the time John made The Fog, do you think there was a certain expectation that he match Halloween, in terms of scares or horror content?

No, I don't think so. Because they were very different types of films.

After The Fog, you went on to appear in his next film, Escape from New York, and the following year you starred in Swamp Thing. How did you become involved with that? Did Wes Craven or the film's producers seek you out because of the success of The Fog?

No, I don't think it was because of The Fog. They offered me the role and I fell in love with the script.

I understand that Carpenter was a fan of Craven's work, and suggested that you do the film.

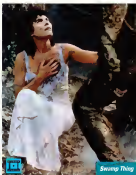
Yes, if I can recall, John did do that.

Do you have any recollections of making Swamp Thing? I understand there were some problems with the production.

Oh yes. Wes was constantly having to rip pages out of the script, because the budget was being cut smaller and smaller.

Watching the film, it looks like it was a muggy, rather uncomfortable shoot.

Yes, well, when going into the water, we had to put cotton dipped in antiseptic solution in our ears, because with the parasites in the water, they were afraid of us getting sick.



Two Evil Eyes



And there were the snakes and the chiggers. It wasn't as bad as getting attacked by rats [in 1995's *Burial of the Rats*], but it was close. [Laughs.]

As you mentioned, there were some budgetary problems with the film, which is evident in some scenes when the Swamp Thing costume is ripped in places. But despite that it still works.

Yes, you wouldn't believe how many people still come up to me and tell me that it is their favourite film, or one of their favourite films.

After Swamp Thing, you appeared in Creepshow as the strength wife of your Fog co-star, Neil Patrick Harris. How was it making that film, and working with George A. Romero?

Tommy Lickia, who is one of my oldest and dearest friends and who also appears in it, told me that I had to be in it. George was great, but when I first read the script I thought, "This is too bloody, too gross." But Tom said to me, "No, you don't understand. George will be shooting this in a very stylized way, and it will look like a comic book." I loved making the film. It was a lot of fun because I loved the role of Belle, she is one of my favourite characters. The role was so outrageous, and just so far removed from what I really am like. I mean, I had never even been drunk once in my life. I just don't know how it's like. And I was so afraid of going over the top, but George told me that's what he wanted.

Do you know whether the creature in your episode was a puppet, or a man in a costume?

You know, someone else asked me that recently, and yes, as far as I can remember, it was a person inside a costume. In fact, it may have even been Tom Savini in the costume.

In the majority of your films, you've played strong, highly capable female characters. Why do you think you are given such roles?

It goes as far back as my role in *Fiddler on the Roof*, in which I played the second daughter, Hodel, who went off and moved to Siberia, which you would have to have a lot

WHY I LOVE ADRIENNE BARBEAU by JAMES WOODS

Although she's appeared in numerous genre films, Adrienne Barbeau is not a "screen queen" — or at least I've never considered her to be one. A title bestowed upon her contemporary, Jamie Lee Curtis (and many others), the term screen queen brings to mind someone who is victimized onscreen, but Barbeau rarely allowed herself to be the victim. Maybe that's because the actress — who has been directed by three of the biggest names in horror: John Carpenter, George A. Romero and Wes Craven — was more than a decade older than Curtis and other "final girls," which helped imbue her roles with an added maturity, capability and strength. And while she certainly did a bit of screaming, Barbeau holds her own against the antagonists in her films. No, she's not a screen queen but a horror heroine. Here are a few reasons why.

1. As KAT Radio DJ Steve Wayne, Barbeau puts herself in danger to alert her son and the residents of Antonio Bay of menacing ghosts in *The Fog* (1980). Warding off phantom mariners on the roof of her lighthouse radio station, Steve is stabbed in the shoulder with a hook but pulls it out and uses it as a weapon against them.

2. In *Swamp Thing* (1982), Barbeau plays government agent Alice Cable, who fights back against the evil Ancestral (Louis Jourdan) and his henchmen with both guns and bare hands. And in the case of the despicable Ferret (David Hess), with a kick to the groin.

3. *Escape From New York* (1981) features Barbeau as the jailer-packing Maggie, who stands up to the villainous Duke (Isaac Hayes) by trying to shoot down his car so that Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) can make his escape.



Creepshow



Cremation



of guts to do [laughs] But I don't know why. Perhaps I really am a strong female character. I came from a long line of strong American women, whose ancestors survived the [1915 Armenian] Genocide. My mom worked right up until four months before she died, at 81. And my Aunt Ruby lives by herself in her three-bedroom home, which she keeps clean, and also tends to her garden.

In addition to acting, you've released your memoirs and have written two vampire novels. How did you find yourself moving into writing?

One of my closest friends, Suzanne, had passed away in 1990, and I was very depressed. It affected me deeply and a few months later, I was still feeling down, when I met a woman who reminded me of Suzanne. She looked just like her. She had attended a writing class and told me that I should take a writing workshop, too. It was like all those years ago when my other friend had told me to get into acting in New York. So I did, and the instructor in the workshop read my work and said, "I think there's a book in this." With my novels, a writer named Michael Scott came to me and said, "I think you should write a horror novel." I told him that I didn't know anything about plot development, and he said, "Well, I'll teach you." For the second book, he wasn't available, so I wrote it on my own. And now, I've started on a third.

Many of your genre films are now considered classics. How do you view the films? Are you surprised at their popularity after all these years?

Horror fans are the most devoted, loyal fans. You

couldn't ask for nicer fans. I've had people who came up to me and say, "I watch *The Fog* every week," or "I see it once a month."

Yes, well, I am guilty of that, as I've probably seen it around 30 or so times myself. I consider it my "birthday movie," as the actors in the film take a piece very close to my birthday and I have a ritual of watching it once a year on my birthday.

That's funny, because when I think of *The Fog*, I can't remember it being set on a particular date.

It's set on April 21st.

Oh, yes, the anniversary of the ship going down.

In the marketing of the movie, they never gave Tom [Alkisa] enough credit. In my opinion, it was really you, Tom and, to a lesser extent, Hal Holbrook who really carried the film.

Well, you'll love *Love After* then, because I use Tom as a character in the book and you'll enjoy that part of it.

He's a really great actor.

He is a great actor and a great man. And one of my closest friends. I just love him to death. And he's a real character, too.

With all the things that you've done over the course of your life, what do you consider to be your greatest accomplishment?

Well, that's easy, easy, easy. It's my three children [Cady Carpenter and William and Walker Van Zandt].

THE EXORCIST DIRECTOR REVEALS JUST HOW SATANIC THINGS GOT WHILE MAKING HIS MASTERPIECE

WILLIAM FRIEDKIN

AS TOLD BY MICHAEL DOYLE

"IT WAS A FASCINATING PLACE TO BE AND I KNEW THAT THE ATMOSPHERE, MOOD, COLOURS AND TEXTURES OF IRAQ COULD NOT BE REPRODUCED ON A SOUNDSTAGE — not to my satisfaction anyway. It just wouldn't have the same authenticity. There was so much history there. We had brought over this fourteen-foot-high floorglass statue of the dervish Pazuzu that [Father] Merrin encounters in the desert. It was built in Los Angeles — a perfect replica that had been recreated from actual photographs at the British Museum and then shipped to Iraq. Actually, the arrival of the statue was delayed and we later learned this was because the customs agents were disturbed by it. They did not want to be handling this thing. Shortly after we arrived, rumours quickly circulated that American devil worshippers were in Iraq at the invitation of the Ba'ath Party. This prompted the sheikh of the Yezidi to send out word that he would like to meet me. Now, the Yezidi were renowned to practice human sacrifices and were an ancient satanic tribe of Kurdish descent. The sheikh obviously thought that I shared his satanic beliefs and he must have been curious about me. The Ba'athists were very reluctant for me to visit the Yezidi encampment because it was potentially dan-

gerous, but I went anyway and worked with the sheikh.

The Yezidi have their own language called Kirmancî. This language is designed to prevent their people from ever having to offer the 'sh' sound as it would take the name of Shaitan ['Satan']. The Yezidi believe that the Earth is the domain of Satan and for that reason he must be accorded due respect. This is very important for them... They don't eat insects because they believe that the spirit of the Devil resides in it. They also believe that the spirit of Satan lives in snakes and flies, and I was warned by the sheikh never to kill a fly and that I should avoid harming them at all times. This was rather difficult and problematic, as flies were fucking buzzing around everywhere! I mean, this guy was literally covered in them! Flies were crawling all over his face and body, moving through his hair and beard, going in and out of his nose and mouth, and all this while he just calmly sat there as we conversed. The sheikh was very disappointed when I informed him that the statue of Pazuzu was for a movie, but he'd never even seen a movie in his entire life. He'd never seen an American citizen for that matter. The United States actually had no diplomatic relations with Iraq so it was a very interesting time."



The Exorcist



RICHARD STANLEY DISCUSSES THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF HIS SCI-FI/HORROR DEBUT

RICHARD STANLEY ON HARDWARE BY MURCH DAVIS

THE PLACE: GREAT BRITAIN, CIRCA THE END OF THE '80s, WHERE RECESSION AND THE ELIMINATION OF A GOVERNMENT TAX BREAK HAD TAKEN THEIR TOLL. It was the beginning of the end for the UK film industry as the world had known it. From this climate of shifting sands emerged Richard Stanley's *Hardware*, an extraordinary post-apocalyptic sci-fi/horror adrenaline blast that was at once a throwback to beloved hydraulic robot thrillers while also an embarrassingly riveting, politically charged cyberpunk death trip unlike anything seen before. Darkly witty and poetic, the film is bursting with not just explosive ultra-violence, but also breathtaking visuals.

Set in a radiation-riddled future world, *Hardware*'s plot is, on the surface, relatively straightforward: No. 1 (Dylan McDermott) buys the remains of a freakish-looking robot and gives it to his sculptor girlfriend, Jill (Stacey Traves), who immediately begins to incorporate the "trait" into her art. But what at first appear to be intriguing scraps of dead technology are actually core components of the biblically

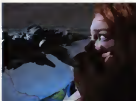
christened M.A.R.K. 13, a nightmarish government-manufactured killing machine that was created as part of a forgotten Emergency Population Control Bill. The self-sustaining machine's torso even comes equipped with an arsenal of death tools: saws, drills, knives and syringes filled with a toxic hallucinogen. Over the course of an evening, the M.A.R.K. 13 rebuilds itself and wages a bloody war against everyone in sight. To make the ride even wilder, there are carnses from Iggy Pop, Fields of the Nephilim frontman Carl McCoy and Lemmy from Motörhead.

The movie was made for under a million dollars by a politically radical teenage visionary of South African descent, fresh upon his return from fighting alongside a guerrilla party in the Afghan War. Not surprisingly, nothing about *Hardware* is conventional, and the genre world was gobsmacked. Stanley would go on to write and direct the 1992 horror film *Dust Devil*, co-script Nacho Cerdá's *The Abandoned* and create a string of acclaimed documentaries: *Voices of the Moon*, *The White Darkness*, *The Secret Glory* and *L'ordre monde*.

Stanley took some time to help *Rue Morgue* reverse engineer his landmark 1996 debut.

You made *Hardware* when you were nineteen. How did you convince investors to give you a shot at writing/directing such an eclectic film?

I guess there's something to be said for youth. I was pretty feisty for my age, regular piece of work I was, and of course the British film industry was in somewhat better shape in those far-off days. Come to think of it, the whole damn world was in better shape. Repertory cinema still existed and the UK still had something resembling an ex-





Hardware

dependent distribution system that featured mondo weirdo flicks like mine. Technically I probably started dress rehearsal the best when I was fifteen with a Super 8 movie I shot back in South Africa (*Incidents in an Expanding Universe*) that, along with the music videos I churned out when I first hit the UK, helped chart the psychogeography of the weird near-future netherworld *Hardware*'s habits, as well as establish the tone of the music and visuals. The screenplay was eventually picked up for development by Stephen Woolley at Palace Pictures, who was looking for homegrown material akin to Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead*, the film that had launched Palace's video arm back in the mid-'80s. By then, over a year had elapsed since I'd circulated the verbal draft and despondent at making a go of becoming a writer-director hyphenate I had not only given up on the Min biz but on Western Civilization itself, dropping out to join a fundamentalist Afghan guerrilla party and throwing in my lot with the people of Kandahar in their struggle against the Russians. It's to the producers' credit that they eventually succeeded in tracking me down and persuading me to be repatriated to Britain where I picked up the reins on the project and went straight into pre-production.

What are the story's roots?

The best is breadboarded together from so many disparate sources that it would take more time and space than we have on hand to list 'em out. Sources as disparate as H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, Roger Joseph Zelig's *Greenwich Alley*, Dario Argento's *Suspense* and the early Warren comics, particularly the work of Creeper-cover artist Vaughn Bodé, whose Day-Glo skies and gothic biome-



chanical iconography indelibly burned its way into my proto imagination. The whole multi-colored messianic eventually crystallized around a dream I had when I was thirteen or fourteen. A dark oven in a hat and coat striking this godforsaken wasteland, respirator fitting as he clicks, searching for something unseen. He falls to his knees and starts digging with his hands, slowly unearthing what I thought would be an anti-personnel mine or some sort of unexploded ordnance, but then he draws this steel skull from the dirt, a skull with hypodermic needles instead of teeth and camera lenses for fuckin' eyes.

Why did you choose to stage the story against a post-apocalyptic landscape?

I was always frightened I'd end up livin' in that place. It isn't your standard-issue post-nuke movie. This hasn't happened as a result of a single war or cataclysm but because of decades of overpopulation and environmental attrition. We didn't have *All Gore* in those days, but Harry

Harrison's *Make Room, Make Room* hit me hard when I first read it, and I guess I took all those statistics about the "greenhouse effect" and the Earth running out of natural resources to heart when I was a kid. I figured if one made enough of a fuss about what was going on out there, folk might just get around to *doin' somethin'* about it. Kinda the same way all those anti-nuke movies back in the '60s, like *Threads* and *The Day After*, helped convince people state-side that a thermonuclear exchange with the USSR really wasn't such a sweet idea.

Fear of technology drives this film — do you have a particular fear of machines?

I always felt an irrational fear of machines as a child and even today the sight of those prototype drone soldiers currently being tested by the US military under the Pentagon's Joint Robotic Masterplan gives me the heebies' creeps. The sound of their servo-motors and the jerky movements of their piston-driven limbs literally makes my flesh crawl. I fear them with the deep, irrational sense of panic one might feel from looking into a spider's seat or a can of worms and maggots.

Hardware was shot in just six weeks, which is crazy for such an elaborately staged film.

Actually, in retrospect, six weeks sounds like a luxury. This being the post-digital era, I can't persuade the suits to let me have more than four weeks for pretty much anything I pitch, four and a half weeks tops. Seems all the money nowadays is thrown at post but everything you see in *Hardware* was done live on set. Of course, selling the "dread" and the FX required a stacked amount of set-ups. I mean absolutely nothing could hold up long enough to shoot a cohesive master. Coupled with the

perspective sets, which further restricted camera movement, it meant we had to box pretty smart. By running two crews — a male unit for the principal cast and a tight second unit that worked the nightshift on the same sets using the same equipment — we were able to keep *hardware* over 24/7. Of course it meant I had to learn to live without sleep. Every time I closed my eyes I'd take a couple of set-ups.

How did working in that environment affect you?

Working largely on one set was a blessing at first but after the chicken feathers, Kano syrup and broken glass started flyin' that place turned into a friggin' chernobyl house pretty fast. The only thing to do under the circumstances was to get myself a hot. By the time it was over, all the major relationships in my life had gone south and I was pretty close to certifiable. I remember feeling angry and depressed for about twelve months afterwards. Eventually I gathered all that self-induced psychosis together into another script and called it *Dust Devil*.

How do you see Hardware fitting into the cultural landscape of today?

It's kinda depressing to realize just how little has really changed. On the one hand, *Hardware* functions as an effective time capsule of late '80s industrial culture, while on the other it tickles a raft of themes that remain unsettlingly relevant: birth control, global warming, perpetual war, the growth of the right-wing military industrial complex and the steady erosion of Western standards of living. With the advent of a new generation of drone soldiers set to replace up to a quarter of America's ground forces by 2020, courtesy of DARPA, it would seem that the day of the 'dread' is all but upon us.



THE FORMER MONSTER KID BEHIND SEVERAL AWARD-WINNING
STEPHEN KING ADAPTATIONS GIVES HIS PERSPECTIVE ON
HUMANS AS HORROR MOVIE VILLAINS

FRANK DARABONT

AS TOLD TO DAVE ALEXANDER

WHAT'S PROBABLY MOST PERTINENT [TO MY LOVE OF HORROR] IS BEING FIVE YEARS OLD AND SEEING DRACULA ON TELEVISION ON WEEKENDS. Our local LA station was playing these great old Universal Monster movies, just like every other local station back then, and if it wasn't Dracula, it was The Wolfman, and if it wasn't that, it was The Creature From the Black Lagoon. I think it's a genetic predisposition — you either love this stuff or ya don't, and I loved it from my earliest memories.

Whatever work I've done in life, I've always followed things I feel I could get most excited about. Whether it's something with Tom Hanks in it or whether it's television with zombies in it, it's the gig I want to get most excited about. ...I want to be really excited about what I'm doing or I just can't get behind it. Nobody really has asked [about why I've jumped between Oscar-winning Hollywood films and smaller budget genre projects], which I think is indicative of how far into the mainstream consciousness this kind of storytelling has gone in recent years and recent decades. Because when I was a kid, if you said you

liked that horror stuff, everybody looked at you really weird, and the jocks would give you shit. "Wow, you like the horror stuff? You're an oddball!" You don't get that anymore. Now, science fiction and horror and all the genre stuff really has become the mainstream. It's not as ghettoized as it once was in people's perception.

And it's not the Creature From Outer Space that caused the holocaust, and it's not Dracula that killed 50 million people in World War II, it is us. We did it to ourselves, and we continue to do it to ourselves. And that's the real fear: what are people capable of, especially when there's a mindless mob mentality.

Seriously, the breakdown of social order, the loss of loved ones, the loss of resources, the struggle for survival is the perfect description of the dread we're all feeling. Geez, I guess the part of it that worries me most, which plugs right into the zombie thing, is fear of the mob, once we become mindless, reactive swarms. Look at *The Mole*; it plugs right into these ideas too. It's not necessarily the tentacles that scare me as much as how the people are gonna react."



The Mist



THE LATE 'LON CHANEY OF SPAIN' DISCUSSES HIS UNWAVERING PASSION FOR GOTHIC HORROR

PAUL NASCHY in THE GORE-MET

DUBBED "THE LON CHANEY OF SPAIN," JACINTO MOLINA (1934-2005), BEST KNOWN TO CULT FILM FANS AS PAUL NASCHY — actor, writer, producer and director — is the single greatest figure of the Spanish horror boom of the 1970s. After working as an extra in a variety of repairs and penning a number of western novels, the champion bodybuilder sold his first script, *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*, in 1966. When the producers were unable to find a suitable actor to star as the wolf man, they approached Molina for the role and thus launched the career of one of the world's greatest proponents of terrible cinema.

Molina's love for the Universal monster movies of the '40s resulted in the classic *The Werewolf vs. Vampire Woman*, which became an international success as *The Werewolf vs. the Vampire Woman* in 1971. A flurry of Spanish productions followed, with Molina's films *The Hunch-*

back of the Morgue (1972), *Horror Rises from the Tomb* (1973) and *Curse of the Devil* (1973) among the most highly regarded. The popularity of horror films, which were often vehicles for criticism of the fascist regime of General Franco, waned when strict censorship laws were lifted in the late '70s and audiences turned to previously forbidden sex films and Hollywood blockbusters.

Although the domestic industry had collapsed, Molina's devotion to gothic horror had garnered him a loyal international cult following and he continued to produce, direct and star in genre films. The ones he made in the early '80s, notably *Woman Werds* (1980), *The Crowing* (1980) and *Beats Beats* (1982), rank amongst his best.

Molina continued to work sporadically in the '90s and the early part of the new millennium. The DVD revolution revitalized his career, with several of his greatest films, once shoddy bootlegs, now released in pristine digital presentations. His 2004 movie, *Raja Sangre* (2004), was a professional triumph for the veteran thespian. While genre icons Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi ended their careers in tawdry low-budget films, cast for their astro-marquee value, Molina, at 71, delivered what was possibly his most ferocious performance.

Rue Morgue spoke with the legend from his home in Spain, just prior to the film's North American release in 2005.

How did you get involved in films?

I was a student and a sportsman; movies were so far away from my world at the beginning. My first contact with the film industry was as an extra in Nicholas Ray's *King of Kings*. At the time, acting was a hobby for me, but I got to

The Werewolf vs. Vampire Woman



know the business from the inside. My first professional jobs were with Spanish directors Manuel Mur Ois, Pedro Lazaga, Warrens Ozores and the Italian Gian Puccio.

What drew you to horror?

My first cinematic love was the serial movie *Drums of Fu-Manchu* [1940] and the [Mexican] film *Dr. Satan* [1962]. My other passion was comics, but I must say that my favorite genre was the western, and I wrote a few novels in that style. My love affair with horror began with literature: Bram Stoker, Sheridan Le Fanu, Guy de Maupassant, Arthur Conan Doyle, etc. And more than the Universal movies, [was the influence of] the books upon which these movies were based that began to drive me down the horror road. The first Universal movie I saw was *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* [1943] and, after a lot of time, I saw the others, but that movie marked the future for me. My other favorite styles are German Expressionism and the Latin *fantastique* of Italy and Spain.

Why did audiences initially embrace horror films and then abandon them just a few years later?

The Spanish horror boom ended because of politics. Laws were enacted that protected realistic cinema (civil war, social themes, comedy). This made fantastic and horror films go out of fashion, but I kept fighting for the genre in Spain, co-producing movies with Japan . . . We must remember the strong censorship that Spanish cinema suffered at that time. Overall, making horror movies in Spain was, and still is, very hard.

How did working in that atmosphere affect your films?

My films are greatly affected by cultural, social and religious mores. I am very influenced by two Spanish painters, José Gudiérrez Solana and Francisco Goya, and this is very present in my style, specifically in *El Huevo del Francés* [The Frenchman]. It's really about how different they are, and the darkness of Goya's style, which is very hard and obscure. In one of Goya's paintings there's a very enlightening picture of a Spanish court with a dark atmosphere [witches' sabbath] with a lot of witches. I always was impressed with these kinds of people, the "different" people.

What are your feelings on how your films have been distributed through the years? Do recent DVD releases accurately reflect your original vision?

I think that, in general, international distribution for my films has been poor. I hope with DVD, the original versions of them can be seen, although it's possible that my two of my favorite titles, *El Huevo del Francés* [1977] and *El Caminante* [The Wayfarer, 1978], would be difficult to accept by my fans.

Why would fans find these films in particular difficult to accept?

They are different than the other movies I have made because they tell of a history with a lot of social change. *El Huevo del Francés* is based on real events in the dark Spain of 1910. It's a tale about a French murderer who



Scene from *El Huevo del Francés*

killed for money it was very difficult to find all the documents from that period in time and I also made the movie in the exact places where the murderer lived. It's very realistic and very far away from the [fantasy] movies I usually made. *El Comisario* is a dark comedy about the Devil, who turns into a human because he wanted to know why he fell, and begins to kill, lie, fuck and steal, but in the end he finally sees that men are worse than him.

Looking back on your career, which film do you consider your greatest accomplishment?

Without doubt, *El Huerto del Frances* because of the final result, the vision of a dark Spain. This is a very special country with a lot of myths and you can see in the culture of the Spanish people all the ghosts of the past. For that reason I thought in 1977 that I had a history to tell.

Many of your characters have a public face that masks secret desires. For example, the character of Pablo Thewenet in *Rejo Sangre* seems to abhor violence while at the same time he commits it. What fascinates you about duality of human nature?

Human nature is very complicated. Pablo Thewenet doesn't receive justice. If there is anything that could turn a person to violence, it is a lack of justice. I am fascinated by the ancient myth about good and evil. [As in] *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Pablo Thewenet is a very similar character.

How much of *Rejo Sangre* is drawn from your personal experience? Is it an indictment of how the industry regards older actors?

In *Rejo Sangre* there are a lot of truths about the Spanish film industry. It isn't autobiographical, but is based on my own experience. I have to say that *Rejo* gave me a great deal of satisfaction and I hope that it endures, because although it's fantastic, it contains fundamental truths.

Tell us about your newest and final written film, *Terror of the Werewolf*.

Waldemar Dominsky is a character that I love so much because in that man you can find a lot of me. I see him as a good man marked by a curse that turns him to murder. What can I say? He's really human; he falls in love and knows sadness and death. Waldemar is difficult to explain because in him you can see elements of Spanish history from after the war to the present day. When the character was born in 1968 I thought he would last for one film, and not finish in 2003!

What's next for you?

I just finished a film in Brazil called *Amazonia Misteriosa* and I am working on a script called *Epitaph*. I hope the full moon will rise again, we will see...

El Comisario



Rejo Sangre



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CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS**

BOB CLARK

INTERVIEW BY RUSTY NAILS

In what extent would you say that *Children* was influenced by *Night of the Living Dead*?

I had seen *Night of the Living Dead* and admired it immensely, and indeed we based *Children* on it. We didn't want to copy it, though. We saw *Children* as a satirical version of *Night of the Living Dead*. We wanted to have fun with the idea of it.

It certainly has a different look than George A. Romero's film.

We purposely tried to bring a look that was a bit different than *Night of the Living Dead*. Alan Ormsby would come to the set a few hours early to do the makeup effects, even though neither he nor the assistant had any schooling about makeup other than teaching themselves. After Alan finished with makeup on the other actors he would come to the set and get ready to act in the film.

It had a much lower budget than *Night's* \$114,000 price tag, correct?

We had so little money to make it. The truly independent film has the incredible problem at shortness of cash. When we started, it was fairly impossible to make an independent film. Nowadays it's much easier, that's proven when you see how many independent films get sold into the realm of the major studios. We had \$60,000 and we stole and cheated everything we could in gear and equipment. We only had eleven nights to shoot the whole film in Coral Gables, Florida, and it was not a short film.

How did you put it all?

I planned out every aspect of the film in great detail. I didn't do storyboards, but I had [index cards] of every part of the film, as well as schematics. If we were supposed to do seventeen shots in one day, we did seventeen shots.

You must've had a very dedicated crew.

I am a great believer in the co-operative nature of film art.

I believe it is a very wise and important thing to work with and listen to your crew and to hear their ideas. From the lighting people to the actors, I always take note of good suggestions.

How did *Children* launch your career making feature films in Canada?

When the film was first finished, horror schlockmeister Ted K. Mikes [director of *Astro Zombies*, *The Coppe Genders* and *The Gelf Squad*] was just starting a small distribution company in the United States. They didn't put much money behind the film when it came out and it didn't do too well. Later the film was bought by Quadrant Films in Canada and they put some substantial money behind the marketing and promotion of the piece, and the film was a moderate to large success in Canada and the whole everything started. Quadrant later gave me money to finance my next picture, *DeathDance*.

Many low budget filmmakers, including Romero, have battled for creative control throughout their careers. Is this something you've faced?

I've never had to worry about creative control. I've always had complete control of my films.



Children Shouldn't Play With Dead Things



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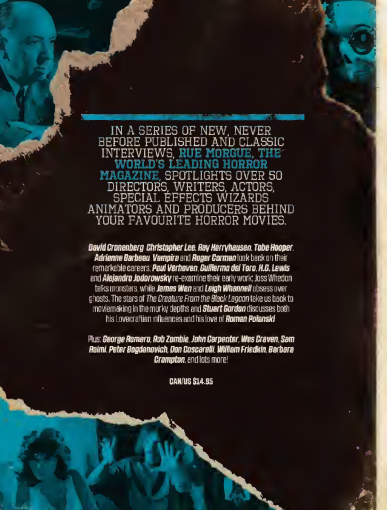
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